CONSUMERIZATION OF IT

David Moschella says blogs, wikis, iPods and browser-based apps are making inroads into corporate IT. PAGE 25

SECURITY CHECK

Breaches at the VA and other agencies prompt calls for security reviews. PAGE 12

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JUNE 19, 2006 ▪ VOL. 40 ▪ NO. 25 ▪ $5/COPY

Curtain Closing On Gates Era At Microsoft

IT managers say transition plan has benefits, pitfalls

BY HEATHER HAVENSTEIN AND CAROL SLIWA

After Microsoft Corp. said last week that Bill Gates will step away from a day-to-day role at the company over the next two years, users lauded his contributions to Microsoft and the IT industry. But many said they think the change could be positive for Microsoft as it maneuvers to fend off competition from Google Inc., Linux vendors and other emerging rivals.

For example, Christopher Wanko, a lead systems analyst at Schering-Plough Corp. in Kenilworth, N.J., described the transition plan as "absolutely good news" for Microsoft. It comes "at a time when the old

Gates, page 16

> **The old school needs to become a hallowed memory.**
>
> CHRISTOPHER WANKO, lead systems analyst, Schering-Plough Corp.

Ozzie sees IT role for 'Live' services; users are unsure

BY CAROL SLIWA
BOSTON

Just days before he succeeded Bill Gates as Microsoft Corp.'s chief software architect, Ray Ozzie last week heralded a new era of "services disruption" that he claimed will transform the way enterprise IT infrastructures and business systems are designed, deployed, managed and used.

But the attempt by Ozzie, then Microsoft's chief technical officer, to spin a corporate IT angle for the company's Internet-based "Live" services strategy failed to strike a uniformly resonant chord. IT professionals at Microsoft's TechEd 2006 conference here were mixed on whether they

Microsoft Live, page 92

NEWSPAPER

COMPUTERWORLD 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2006

13th ANNUAL REPORT

SPECIAL REPORT Technologists at these choice workplaces are full-fledged partners in the business while earning tip-top pay and perks. What's more, results of a survey of 27,108 IT workers at these companies show job security is on the rise. **Page 27**

Wish You Worked There? Use our interactive chart to find a company that fits your priorities. **www.computerworld.com/06/bestplaces**

THE Top Five

1	Quicken Loans Inc.
2	University of Miami
3	The Capital Group Cos.
4	American Fidelity Assurance Co.
5	Grant Thornton LLP

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_INFRASTRUCTURE LOG

_DAY 8: I give up. Our infrastructure is so inflexible. Our apps and processes don't work together. We can't respond quickly to change. It's out of control.

_Gil had an epiphany. Duct tape. A few dozen rolls later and he's integrated everything, and everyone, by hand.

_DAY 10: Duct tape can fix many things. Basketballs. Sofas. Doorknobs. But not widespread app and process inflexibility.

_DAY 13: I've found something better: IBM WebSphere middleware. It'll make our infrastructure more flexible by seamlessly integrating our apps. We can change processes in a snap and use what we already have—even apps from SAP and Oracle. And with IBM's industry-specific expertise, we're on our way to enabling a service oriented architecture.

_Hmmmm...WebSphere. More powerful than duct tape.

Download our IBM SOA Assessment Tool at:

IBM.COM/**TAKEBACKCONTROL**/SOA

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06.19.06

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8 **HP plans** to announce three OpenView management tools at its software user conference this week.

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$$CTO

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24 **Don Tennant** believes no law should stand in the way of parents who want to implant microchips with GPS tracking capability in their children.

24 **Bruce A. Stewart** is amazed that some IT people still try to sell technology to their users instead of the business-related value that technology delivers.

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COMPUTERWORLD 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2006

SPECIAL REPORT Technologists at this year's Best Places to Work in IT are recognized as creators and co-workers, too, with lives outside the office. When they ask for changes, propose ideas and give their feedback, their companies listen — and act. **Package begins on page 27.**

Inside the Top Five

A typical day at these top-ranked IT departments is full of hustle and hard work, and energized IT staffers.

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50 **See our full list of the top 100 companies, with information about training, staff turnover and promotions.** Plus, learn how the Best Places were chosen, and check out statistics from a survey of 27,108 IT workers from the final 100 companies.

72 **Tech for the Techie.** At Best Places, IT employees jockey for leading-edge technology projects. But who's keeping the lights on?

74 **Brain Trust.** These Best Places keep smart staffers content and secure by feeding their minds and avoiding the urge to overhire.

76 **Business 101.** Best Places keep staffers' business skills as sharp as their tech smarts with job rotations and mentoring.

WWW.COMPUTERWORLD.COM

The following resources can be found at computerworld.com/06/bestplaces:

Wish You Worked There? Find the company that best fits your priorities with our sortable chart. Identify the top companies for diversity, training, benefits and other factors. Plus, sort by region.

A Closer Look. View the top benefits and retention methods at the 100 Best Places, plus check out statistics on future hiring and training budgets. Survey results from IT workers at the top 100 companies show satisfaction ratings for bonuses, salaries, management, training and other factors.

_INFRASTRUCTURE LOG

_DAY 19: The business is, uh, coming apart. I.T. isn't in sync with the suits. No one's sure what they need to do. It's totally out of control.

_DAY 20: Gil fell into the crack. Maintenance is on it.

_DAY 24: I've got it. IBM Rational. A modular platform that lets us govern the entire development process and align it with our business goals. Now everyone's on the same page. Plus, we can ensure our software's in compliance and implement a service oriented architecture.

_Everyone's glad the crack is gone. Gil says his nightmares about "the dark place" are practically over.

Get our white paper on governing development at:
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AT DEADLINE

Excel Flaw Found After Patch Release

A new vulnerability was discovered in Microsoft Corp.'s Excel spreadsheet late last week, just days after the company distributed monthly patches to fix problems with several of its applications. Earlier in the week, Microsoft issued 12 bulletins detailing fixes for 21 separate vulnerabilities. The company rated eight of the bulletins and 12 of the vulnerabilities critical.

U.S. Revises Chinese Tech Trade Controls

The U.S. government has streamlined its controls on dual-use technologies to make it easier for companies to do business in China. Under the revised rules, Chinese companies can import such technologies if they show U.S. officials that they have a "record of nonproliferation and responsible civilian use of U.S. imports," said David McCormick, undersecretary of commerce for industry and security.

Oracle Q4 Results To Top Expectations

Oracle Corp. said its fiscal fourth-quarter results will beat earlier expectations, thanks to a surge in revenue from new software licenses. Preliminary results show a 32% increase in new-license revenue to $2.1 billion. The company had previously predicted an increase of between 8% and 18%. Overall, Oracle said, applications revenue grew 56%, and database sales grew by 18% in the quarter.

Stratus Servers Will Run Red Hat Linux

Stratus Technologies Inc. this week plans to announce that Red Hat Linux will be available across its fault-tolerant server lines beginning in August. The company said it may later support other Linux implementations. Stratus systems now run Windows and its proprietary VOS operating system. Stratus has been offering Linux on its embedded systems since 2004.

HP Revamps Blade Server Line

Vendor adds NonStop fault-tolerant technology and management tools

BY PATRICK THIBODEAU
PALO ALTO, CALIF.

HEWLETT-PACKARD Co. last week unveiled the next generation of its blade server systems, which add improved management capabilities and technologies from its NonStop fault-tolerant line.

The new product line is the result of a three-year development effort that stemmed from HP's expectations that users will increasingly rely on blade technologies.

HP user Sodexho Alliance DS agrees with that notion, expecting that the technology will eventually spread through its IT operations. The Montigny le Bretonneux, France-based food-service company runs a data center in Buffalo, N.Y., that houses some 300 Intel-based Windows servers, 25% of which run on HP's current p-Class blades.

Later this year, the company will begin a gradual migration to the new c-Class servers announced last week, said Kevin Galvin, Sodexho's information services and technology director of LAN services.

Ultimately, he said, Sodexho hopes to replace all of its rack-mounted servers with blades. Galvin said the blades should lead to "significant labor savings, because we're trying to automate things."

The company also expects that the blades will one day let it virtualize its Windows operating system environment, which Galvin said should further cut Sodexho's IT equipment and software costs.

New Features

The HP BladeSystem c-Class technology will replace the p-Class blade, HP said. The company said it will continue to produce the latter blades through 2007 and will support them through 2012.

The HP c-Class chassis can hold 16 server and storage blades; its p-Class predecessor supports 12 blades, HP said.

The new management features include improved integration with other servers, storage that allows virtualization and management from one environment, and LCD screens for monitoring the system.

Blade systems using Intel Corp.'s latest Dempsey and Woodcrest dual-core processors will ship in July. Pricing for those systems will be disclosed when they ship.

HP plans to add blades running Advanced Micro Devices Inc.'s Opteron processors by September and Intel's Itanium processors by the end of the year.

PATRICK THIBODEAU

The LCD screens on the c-Class servers will be "a great boon" for SAG, says KEVIN DONNELLAN.

Scott Stallard, an HP senior vice president and general manager of the company's enterprise servers and storage group, said that HP plans to build NonStop blades, though those products won't ship for several years. In the interim, the c-Class server incorporates NonStop capabilities for adding connections and updating systems without having to take other systems down, he said.

Screens for Actors

One HP blade user, Kevin Donnellan, director of enterprise infrastructure services at the Screen Actors Guild, said the addition of LCD screens will simplify his environment.

"If they can really work, they are going to be a great boon to my administrators," said Donnellan. "A visual display really does help a lot."

The Hollywood-based labor union has been moving from rack-mounted servers to blade servers, but Donnellan noted that some applications, such as the voice response system used with SAG's telephone service, can't be run on a blade.

Although Donnellan hasn't tested the c-Class blade servers yet, he predicted that the new management controls and tools will let his organization manage more blades without increasing head count. "The c-Class blades should give us a lot easier management," he said.

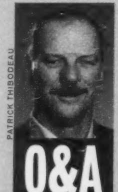
Donnellan said he has gone from 20 Windows-based blades to about 70 blades over the past three years and has been able to manage those systems without hiring additional Windows systems administrators. ▸

Exec: HP Blades Get Fault-Tolerant Feel

PALO ALTO, CALIF.
SCOTT STALLARD, senior vice president and general manager of Hewlett-Packard's enterprise storage and servers group, spoke with *Computerworld* here last week following the launch of the company's new BladeSystem c-Class hardware line. Excerpts from the interview follow:

What will HP be telling its rack-mounted server buyers? Are you going to be saying that the BladeSystem line is your best option? Most customers know what they want versus us steering them in any particular way. If you're a small to medium-size business customer and you don't even have a rack, you know you need a pedestal [system], and that's why we are still selling them. If customers have a more modest data center, they are still going to buy a rack. Where we see blades coming into play is for customers like ourselves – we're going through this big [data center] consolidation. We're tired of 30% utilized stuff sitting around everywhere with too many operations people – we're just going to take it all and put it in this [blade server] footprint.

The other place you see [blades] is when companies go to build out, as an example, remote replicated sites, [where] you just need an infrastructure in a box and would like to manage it remotely.


PATRICK THIBODEAU

You said you're using technologies from HP's NonStop fault-tolerant systems in the BladeSystem line. Which ones? We brought over some of the interconnect technology that is part of Virtual Connect [a virtualized wiring architecture built into BladeSystem]. We also took some of the technologies in hot-plug interfaces. In the NonStop environment, you can never take your system down to accommodate [changes in devices].

Do you plan to build a NonStop blade server? It's going to take a few years, but our plan is to run NonStop – 100%-availability-type systems – on these blades that are specially made but still in the c-Class chassis and that have either dual- or tri-modular redundant capabilities.

It completely changes the economics equation for NonStop computing. Things that used to be only the domain of banks or stock exchanges – those things will not be one-off proprietary systems but instead will be environments of these industry-standard blocks that we deploy dynamically.

– PATRICK THIBODEAU

IBM

_INFRASTRUCTURE LOG

_DAY 49: Things are out of control. Our system is just not secure, flexible or reliable enough. Gil bought some "infrastructure bloodhounds" online. He says they can sniff out any problem.

_DAY 50: They can't. But IBM Tivoli Express middleware can. It's a series of I.T. management solutions designed and priced for mid-sized businesses. Secure, boosts uptime, and protects our data with automated backups. We even got help customizing and implementing it.

_DAY 52: Remind Gil: Bloodhounds not as good at sniffing out problems as they are at chewing Ethernet cables.

Tivoli. Express

Get the Guide to simple, fast, secure I.T. Management at:

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ROI Key to Melding BI, Business Processes

Such efforts also require significant business user input

BY HEATHER HAVENSTEIN
NEW YORK

EMBEDDING BUSINESS intelligence into operational processes can help workers make better decisions, but such IT initiatives must be designed with the help of business users and quickly show a significant return on investment.

Several users with experience building such systems offered that advice at IDC's Business Intelligence and Business Process Forum here last week. All of the users said they have launched projects to infuse business processes with analytics to allow front-line workers to use exception handling to make decisions.

At Capital One Financial Corp., intelligent process automation or operational BI projects focus on high-level strategic areas such as cost cutting or outsourcing to ensure ROI, said David Hummelberg, managing vice president of IT at the McLean, Va.-based financial services firm.

In general, he said, "the value proposition [of a BI project] is pretty foggy going into it. That is why ours have been drafted behind a specific business issue."

Capital One uses intelligent process automation to route calls to 10,000 to 15,000 call center representatives, based on capacity and volume, Hummelberg said. As a result, the company has trimmed the operational costs of its mostly outsourced centers by 12% annually over the past several years while boosting customer satisfaction, he said.

The company has also placed a call center application on the desktops of workers in its outsourcers' facilities. It uses analytics to determine potential cross-selling opportunities based on the demographics and previous buying patterns of callers, he said.

Wayne Sipperly, manager of energy markets analysis at the New York Power Authority, suggested that companies focus such BI projects in areas that can help meet corporate objectives and gain executive support.

The electricity supplier in White Plains, N.Y., has melded analytics and a rules engine with multiple transactional data sources to provide dashboards for its electricity traders, asset managers and executives, Sipperly said.

Since going into production in February 2005, the project has saved traders an hour per day each, yielding $500,000 to $1 million in annual savings for the utility, he said.

"You can't try to sell it for human resources [projects]," Sipperly advised. "You have to sell it where the dollars are."

BROUGHTON: Users "know what the best data is."

The power authority's portal gives traders a dashboard with real-time information they can use to prepare 1,100 daily bids to buy electricity, he said. The traders base those bids on 26 sets of data from 11 sources.

Previously, "traders would end up with two screens and 20 windows open," Sipperly said. "There were no alerts, no trending capabilities. There was a heavy reliance on manual spreadsheets."

Using analytics capabilities, the dashboards help traders create optimal trading strategies. The dashboards can also alert users by e-mail in real time if bids fall below a certain threshold required for the company to meet financial performance or plant commitments, according to Sipperly.

A key challenge to implementing the portal system, Sipperly noted, was persuading users to give up spreadsheets for automated systems.

Efforts to meld BI with business processes must include significant input from business users in addition to generating substantial ROI, said Rick Broughton, director of IT strategy at Dunkin' Brands Inc. in Canton, Mass.

Dunkin' Brands, which operates 12,000 Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins stores, is replacing its manual system for collecting retail data with one that ties BI data to business processes. So far, 300 users have been trained on the new system, with another 200 to be trained, Broughton said.

As IT personnel create the system, business users are being tapped as data stewards because "they know what the best data is and the source for it," he said.

One of the biggest challenges can be keeping users focused on "practical business processes," said Steve Phillips, CIO at Avnet Inc. Although access to real-time information is often associated with these projects, such a capability isn't always necessary. In fact, Phillips said, if data "isn't needed in real time, it can cause unnecessary work." ◗

HP Develops Tool for Analyzing IT Changes

BY MATT HAMBLEN

Hewlett-Packard Co. plans to announce three OpenView management tools at its software user conference in Miami Beach tomorrow, including new analytics software that is designed to run "what-if" simulations of potential changes to IT systems, operations and staffing levels.

For example, an IT manager could use the OpenView DecisionCenter 1.0 analytics tool to determine the additional personnel and IT infrastructure costs of improving server uptime inside a data center, said Bill Emmett, HP's manager of OpenView marketing.

DecisionCenter is based on technology that HP acquired when it bought Peregrine Systems Inc. last December.

Also being announced at the HP Software Forum 2006 is OpenView AssetCenter 5.0, an upgrade of a Peregrine-developed tool for managing the full life cycle of IT assets.

In addition, HP will roll out OpenView Application Insight 7.0, a new version of an internally developed tool that gives IT managers views of the dependencies among applications, servers and other devices on a network.

Mark Bradley, vice president of infrastructure at a global bank that he asked not be named, said he had worked with HP in recent months to improve the DecisionCenter tool. "So far, it is a unique product," Bradley said, adding that the analytics software is designed to help users "improve the efficiency of IT."

For example, Bradley said he has used the tool to analyze how the operations in two mirrored data centers would be affected if he moved two people to jobs outside the facilities. The analysis considered factors such as the job functions that would be lost within the data centers and whether systems maintenance work might slip and for how long.

Bradley has also used the software to generate a predictive analysis of the impact that virtualizing a group of servers would have on performance and costs. He said the bank will implement both DecisionCenter and AssetCenter after they become available in commercial releases, which is scheduled for later this year.

Unisys Corp. helped HP develop DecisionCenter following HP's acquisition of Peregrine, said Sumeet Malhotra, global director of advanced research at Unisys.

Blue Bell, Pa.-based Unisys plans to resell DecisionCenter with its 3D Visible Enterprise consulting program, which is designed to help users set long-term plans that include their IT infrastructure needs.

New Tools From HP

OPENVIEW DECISIONCENTER 1.0

- Analytics software designed to help users align IT installations and data center staffing with changing business needs.
- Due in September, with prices starting at $42,500.

OPENVIEW ASSETCENTER 5.0

- Upgraded tool, originally developed by Peregrine Systems, that automates the process of managing IT assets.
- Targeted for release in Q4; priced at $3,075 per user.

OPENVIEW APPLICATION INSIGHT 7.0

- Identifies links between applications and underlying technology to help systems administrators resolve problems.
- Expected in Q4; pricing starts at $2,146.

Malhotra said that the first version of DecisionCenter doesn't provide insight into the details and "archeology" of existing IT resources. To provide those capabilities, Unisys will supplement the HP software with its own tools and consulting services.

But DecisionCenter "still has a lot of value alone," Malhotra said, adding that Unisys has already deployed it internally and at three user organizations.

Dennis Drogseth, an analyst at Enterprise Management Associates in Boulder, Colo., said DecisionCenter "represents a big opportunity for HP."

He noted that the new tool is part of a trend in which HP and competitors BMC Software Inc., CA Inc. and IBM are offering products that bring together data about IT processes, system architectures and costs so it can be modeled and analyzed. But, Drogseth said, DecisionCenter is distinctive in its focus on using metrics to help users "align IT operations with service quality and cost." ◗

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BRIEFS

Qualcomm Files Complaint vs. Nokia

Qualcomm Inc. has filed a third complaint with the U.S. International Trade Commission charging Nokia Corp. with patent infringement. In a statement, Nokia said Qualcomm likely filed the complaint to help it in renegotiating an agreement between the two firms that is set to expire early next year. Qualcomm said it expects that the USITC probe will begin next month.

Symantec Finds Yahoo E-Mail Worm

Symantec Corp. has identified a Level 2 (elevated risk) mailer worm exploiting a vulnerability in Yahoo Inc.'s Web e-mail system. Mimicking Yahoo's QuickBuilder function, the JS.Yamanner@m worm can gather Yahoo.com and Yahoogroups.com addresses from a user's address book and send them to a central server. Users are advised to block incoming e-mail from an av3@yahoo.com address. Yahoo officials could not be reached for comment.

CA Acquires Records Management Firm

CA Inc. has acquired records-management software and services vendor MDY Group International Inc. for an undisclosed sum. MDY's FileSurf software automates the management of physical, electronic and e-mail records and is designed to make it easier for users to comply with regulatory requirements and internal policies around data storage.

Mobile Firms Join to Build Linux Platform

A group of major mobile phone makers and operators have announced plans to launch a foundation to create an open Linux-based software platform for mobile devices. The companies plan to create an application programming interface specification, an architecture and a source reference they hope will spur sales of Linux-based phones.

[ON THE MARK

HOT TECHNOLOGY TRENDS, NEW PRODUCT NEWS AND INDUSTRY BUZZ BY MARK HALL]

STORAGE CRISIS
S.S.CIO

MATTHEW FAULKNER

The 'Summer of Storage' Looms...

. . . and may leave you in crisis for seasons to come. Patrick Hynds, chief technology officer at NTP Software Inc. in Nashua, N.H., predicts that this summer could mark a turning point in the ability of large organizations to maintain control over their data storage.

HYNDS: Stay on top of storage.

"This is a very critical summer for storage," Hynds says. Why? One easy answer is regulatory compliance. "Companies keep everything now," he observes. Then there's new data-gobbling technology such as the high-definition video format, which consumes as much as 500GB for one hour of video. Corporate trainers and marketers will use HD video, and end users will be dragging USB drives loaded with holiday photos and digital home videos into the office to share with co-workers, says Hynds. "This is a wave, not a slow flood," he warns. And it's only going to get worse. For example, he expects that by 2010, business PCs will come equipped with 10TB disk drives. How will you ensure that all the vital data on those systems is backed up and secured? Hynds argues that storage administrators who think tape should be part of their backup strategies are, well, a tad old-fashioned. "To back up a petabyte, you'd need 1,000 1TB tapes, which don't exist," he says. Hynds doesn't offer a pat answer to the problem but suggests that disk-to-disk tiered storage has supplanted tape for organizations with sprawling storage needs. "If you have not thought out your process for storage growth by the end of summer," he contends, "you'll be in trouble." And you thought you were going on vacation.

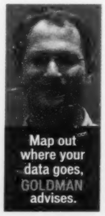
The problem with people is . . .

. . . that they're human. That means they make mistakes — and how. According to consulting firm Enterprise Management Associates in Boulder, Colo., 30% to 50% of application downtime is caused by you and your IT staff, primarily from flubs in configuration and change management processes. Joe Forgione, CEO of Burlington, Mass.-based mValent Inc., claims that his company's Integrity software can prevent most, if not all, human-caused downtime. Integrity lets you create "golden master" application server configurations and apply them to appropriate servers, Forgione says. Bill Thornburg, mValent's vice president of product management, says Integrity also looks for "server drift," when app servers are changed outside of the IT-approved process, and then reports policy violations. Integrity 4.0, which ships next week, adds a dashboard feature for tracking changes to systems. It also integrates with help desk trouble-ticketing tools from BMC Software Inc. and CA Inc. Pricing averages about $125,000.

1 Rank of human error as cause of app downtime, says EMA.

Follow the data to avoid any . . .

. . . nasty surprises. If you knew where all the structured data in your company's databases and spreadsheets went during the course of a day, you'd probably rest a bit easier. But Todd Goldman, vice president of marketing at Exeros Inc. in Santa Clara, Calif., is betting that you aren't feeling so sanguine about how data — sensitive and otherwise — moves from application to application and machine to machine. Most IT shops don't know how that happens, Goldman says. And in an era of evil hackers and meaner compliance auditors, that lack of knowledge is dangerous, he contends. Goldman says DataMapper 2.0, which will be available from Exeros early next month, can "discover how data flows through an organization." The software charts business rules and complex data transformations as information moves between programs. Perpetual licenses start at $88,000.

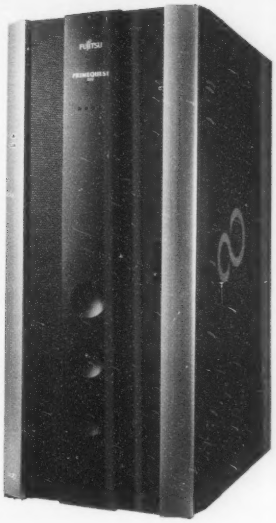


Map out where your data goes, GOLDMAN advises.

The hunt for the best 'Da Vinci coder' . . .

. . . is a mystery this contest hopes to solve. If you think you can develop the coolest real-time application on the planet, consider entering the Da Vinci Coder contest being run by StreamBase Systems Inc. in Lexington, Mass., and Advanced Micro Devices Inc. William Hobbib, StreamBase's vice president of marketing, says there will be weekly prizes, including "the ultimate iPod bundle." The grand prizes include a trip to London and Paris or a flight in a zero-gravity plane. StreamBase is offering a free download of its data analytics software so you can work your real-time magic. Speaking of which, StreamBase 3.5, due next month, increases the software's performance so it can process more than 380,000 messages per second on a single CPU, Hobbib says. The upgrade also adds an event engine to compare real-time data flows with historical information for applications such as detecting credit card fraud. Pricing starts at about $100,000. ▸

HOBBIB: StreamBase will stream data faster.



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Federal Breaches Spark Security Review Push

GAO, administration officials call for look into data collection processes

BY JAIKUMAR VIJAYAN

THE MASSIVE data breach disclosed last month by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has triggered sweeping reviews of information security policies at the VA and at several other government agencies that recently suffered smaller data losses.

And last week, officials at the Government Accountability Office and the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said that federal agencies as a whole need to review their processes for collecting and storing data and controlling access to it.

The string of data breaches highlights the fact that agencies have to take a more strategic approach to guarding personal information, said Linda Koontz, director of information management issues at the GAO.

"We are believers in the notion of privacy impact assessments — of looking at the implications of the information you are collecting and how to protect that," Koontz said in an interview after she testified at a hearing held last Wednesday by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The recent breach disclosures prompted the OMB to direct all agency heads to describe the specific steps they are taking to implement the requirements of the Federal Information Security Management Act in their annual reports on their compliance with FISMA.

"Agencies have a responsibility to ensure that they are FISMA-compliant and that their employees are trained to work with tough security measures," an OMB spokeswoman said. She added that the OMB has set "sound standards and policies" based on FISMA's mandates and is working with agencies "to make sure practices match these policies."

A Stronger FISMA

Rep. Tom Davis (R-Va.), chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform, last week promised to introduce legislation seeking to strengthen breach-notification requirements at agencies. His vow followed a belated disclosure by the Department of Energy that the Social Security numbers and other personal data of about 1,500 employees and contract workers were compromised by a hacker last September.

In addition to the VA and the Energy Department, the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service recently acknowledged that they had been hit by data breaches (see chart).

Davis has said the recent incidents highlight the need to strengthen FISMA's requirements. At a VA-related hearing that the Government Reform Committee held on June 8, he called for the addition of unspecified penalties and incentives to foster better information-security practices.

During the same hearing, VA Secretary R. James Nicholson expanded on some of the measures the agency is taking to prevent further breaches. Among them are a complete ban on using personally owned computers and laptops to log into the agency's networks, and an indefinite suspension of the practice of permitting VA employees to download claims files and work on them from home. Nicholson said he has also ordered a complete recall of all agency-issued laptops for a comprehensive security review by the end of this month.

The VA plans to require laptop users to submit their systems for a monthly review but has not yet decided how that will be done, a spokesman said.

Daniel Galik, chief of mission assurance and security services at the IRS, said at the June 8 hearing that the tax agency is "aggressively reviewing" information security processes after an employee lost a laptop. He added that the agency is looking for security technologies that will enable automatic encryption of all data on its laptops. The goal, he said, is to fully deploy such technologies within six months. ▶

[illegible]

Department of Veterans Affairs
A laptop and an external disk containing personal data on 26.5 million veterans and active-duty personnel were stolen last month from the home of a data analyst.

Internal Revenue Service
An IRS employee lost a laptop containing personal data on 291 agency workers and job applicants after checking it as luggage on an airplane flight.

Social Security Administration
Social Security numbers and other data on about 200 people were stored and not properly secured on an employee-owned laptop that was stolen at a conference.

Department of Energy
The apparent hacking of a server that took place last September but was just disclosed resulted in the potential compromise of data on more than 1,500 individuals.

GAO Official Charges That VA Ignored Security Warnings

The Government Accountability Office gave VA officials several specific warnings about the agency's information security program before the massive data breach there last month, according to **Linda Koontz**, director of information management issues at the GAO. But the VA failed to act on the warnings, Koontz said last week at a hearing held by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. She spoke with *Computerworld* afterward about data security problems at federal agencies. Excerpts from the interview follow:

What went wrong at the VA? The inspector general has both an administrative and a criminal investigation going on, so I can't talk specifically about that. But one of the points we tried to make is that the VA has really failed to establish a comprehensive integrated information security program.

In your testimony, you blamed the leadership at the VA. Why? Part of it has to do with the fact that the problems at the VA are very long-standing, and although [agency officials] have done something to address them, their actions have not been sufficient. I think it's natural for us to believe that they are going to need leadership from the top to break the logjam here.

Does the Federal Information Security Management Act need to be revised? What's the incentive for agencies to comply now? The fallout from a disclosure is certainly enough to make any agency head think about what they are doing in this area. The thing about FISMA is that there may be some things you need to do to tweak it, but probably one of the bigger issues is making sure that agencies comply with what is required right now.

– JAIKUMAR VIJAYAN

MySQL Mistakenly Shares Customer E-mail Addresses

BY TODD R. WEISS

A mass e-mail sent out last week by open-source database vendor MySQL AB erroneously contained the e-mail addresses of about 9,300 customers instead of information on a series of software-support special offers that the company meant to publicize.

The error apparently occurred when a U.S.-based MySQL employee mistakenly pasted the e-mail addresses of all the intended recipients into the body of the message.

In a statement confirming the incident, MySQL said it was "working on a stricter process to prevent this from happening again in the future." The company said that it takes the privacy of its database users "very seriously."

The Uppsala, Sweden-based vendor also said that it had sent a follow-up e-mail to all 9,300 affected users, apologizing for the mistake and explaining how it happened.

Robert Brown, an IT project manager and consultant in Hackettstown, N.J., said he received the errant e-mail and was flabbergasted to find so many customer e-mail addresses — including his own. "I can understand a user error — you know, 100 or 200 addresses," Brown said. "But more than 9,000? Come on."

Brown said he was so bothered by the incident that he called MySQL to complain.

He added that after a *Computerworld* reporter called MySQL to inquire about the snafu, a marketing manager from the software vendor returned his call and left a message acknowledging and apologizing for the incident.

"I'm satisfied," Brown said. "Hopefully, they will implement some training to fix the original problem to stop it from happening again." ▶

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BRIEFS

AOL Starts Testing Corporate IM Tool

AOL LLC has begun publicly testing AIM Pro Professional Edition, a version of its instant messaging service for corporate users. AIM Pro PE is expected to be launched in the third quarter. It was jointly developed with WebEx Communications Inc. AIM Pro PE includes stronger security than the consumer version, and integration with Microsoft Corp.'s Outlook software.

IRS CIO Leaving Post to Join NIST

Internal Revenue Service CIO W. Todd Grams is leaving to become the chief financial officer at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the IRS disclosed. In an e-mail statement, Grams said he will work with NIST officials to support the president's American Competitiveness Initiative. He joined the IRS in February 2001 as CFO and was named CIO in 2003.

Microsoft Forms Interoperability Unit

Microsoft has formed a group that includes company executives and outside IT officials to discuss interoperability. The group will be led by Bob Muglia, senior vice president of Microsoft's server and tool business division, and will include CIOs and chief technology officers from Société Générale Group, LexisNexis Group, Kohl's Department Stores Inc., and the states of Wisconsin and Delaware.

UGS Donates $1.1B In Software to China

UGS Corp. plans to donate $1.1 billion worth of its product life-cycle management software to 87 Chinese colleges and universities. Company officials said they hope to get young Chinese engineers to use the software as the country emerges as a world leader in manufacturing over the next 10 to 15 years. UGS estimated that about 45,000 students will have access to the software.

Applebee's Taps BEA Tool to Boost Operations

Alerts managers when performance levels fall and helps resolve problems

BY HEATHER HAVENSTEIN

APPLEBEE'S International Inc. this month began testing new software that it plans to roll out to its 1,850 restaurants to proactively alert managers when individual store operations deviate from set performance metrics.

The restaurant chain plans to plug BEA Systems Inc.'s AquaLogic HiPer Workspace for Retail software into its existing BEA portal to bolster communications with its restaurant managers, said Frank Ybarra, associate director of communications at the Overland Park, Kan.-based chain.

The BEA software is a composite application that can use Web services to quickly notify store managers when a restaurant isn't meeting certain performance criteria, Ybarra said. The software can also offer possible solutions to problems and provide a platform for communication with store managers, he said.

"As a company, we know that we have significant communication challenges in a very dynamic sales environment," Ybarra said. "We have constantly evolving and improving menus, [and] our [individual restaurant] operators have to have a clear understanding of how to execute those [changes]. We have a second challenge to make sure everyone is focused on the same performance metrics."

Applebee's plans to begin rolling out a production version of the new application for its portal to 500 company-owned restaurants in August. Once the rollout is complete, the software will be installed in each of the company's franchise restaurants, Ybarra said.

Restaurant managers now have access to daily performance records through dashboards using the older BEA portal software, but any deviations and associated actions to fix a problem have to be generated manually, Ybarra said.

With that system, the metrics can become "a sea of information these managers are supposed to weed through every day," added Patty Cutter, Applebee's IT project manager.

The new system will have an interface to the company's data warehouse that will automatically generate alerts and suggested action plans when individual restaurant performance in a specific area — like the speed of getting customers in and out of a restaurant, or customer satisfaction — falls below a threshold, he said.

"It is an exception management situation," Ybarra said. "It is extremely important to us that we minimize the amount of time our managers are spending behind a computer."

Jason Bloomberg, an analyst at ZapThink LLC in Baltimore, said that as companies increasingly move toward service-oriented architectures, their view of the role of portals are evolving.

A portal used to be seen as a browser interface to different enterprise applications that were glued together. That approach makes communication between different sections of the portal difficult, Bloomberg said, comparing the task with "taking a siloed organization and putting a browser in front of it."

The updated portal, as used by Applebee's, can be viewed as a flexible interface for composite applications, he added. ▸

PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLEBEE'S

Applebee's plans to roll out retail software to its 1,850 restaurants.

SAP Updates Global Trading App

BY MARC L. SONGINI

SAP AG last week unveiled a new version of its Global Trade Services software, which officials said can better help customers navigate through the tangle of international trading laws and procedures.

Initially released in 2002, the GTS application is used by some 250 companies to automate the processes involved in cross-border transactions, SAP said.

The latest version, GTS 7.0, is built on top of SAP's NetWeaver middleware technology, said Neetin Datar, director of solutions marketing at SAP's global risk compliance unit.

One customer, Foster City, Calif.-based life sciences firm Applied Biosystems Group, is already considering an upgrade to the new application.

Leighton Yates, senior manager for global trade compliance at Applied Biosystems, said he is interested in Version 7.0 because it supports multiple languages, including Chinese, and offers updated reporting capabilities. The company is now using an earlier version of the application.

Yates also noted that the latest version of GTS provides a trade preferences module that can automate the process of complying with applicable regional trade agreements — a feature that could help Applied Biosystems eliminate redundant processes and save it as much as $1 million.

Added Features

New features in GTS 7.0 also include the ability to automatically create letters of credit, which are commonly used in Europe and Asia, Datar said.

For example, he said that about 70% of all transactions based on letters of credit are rejected because of errors.

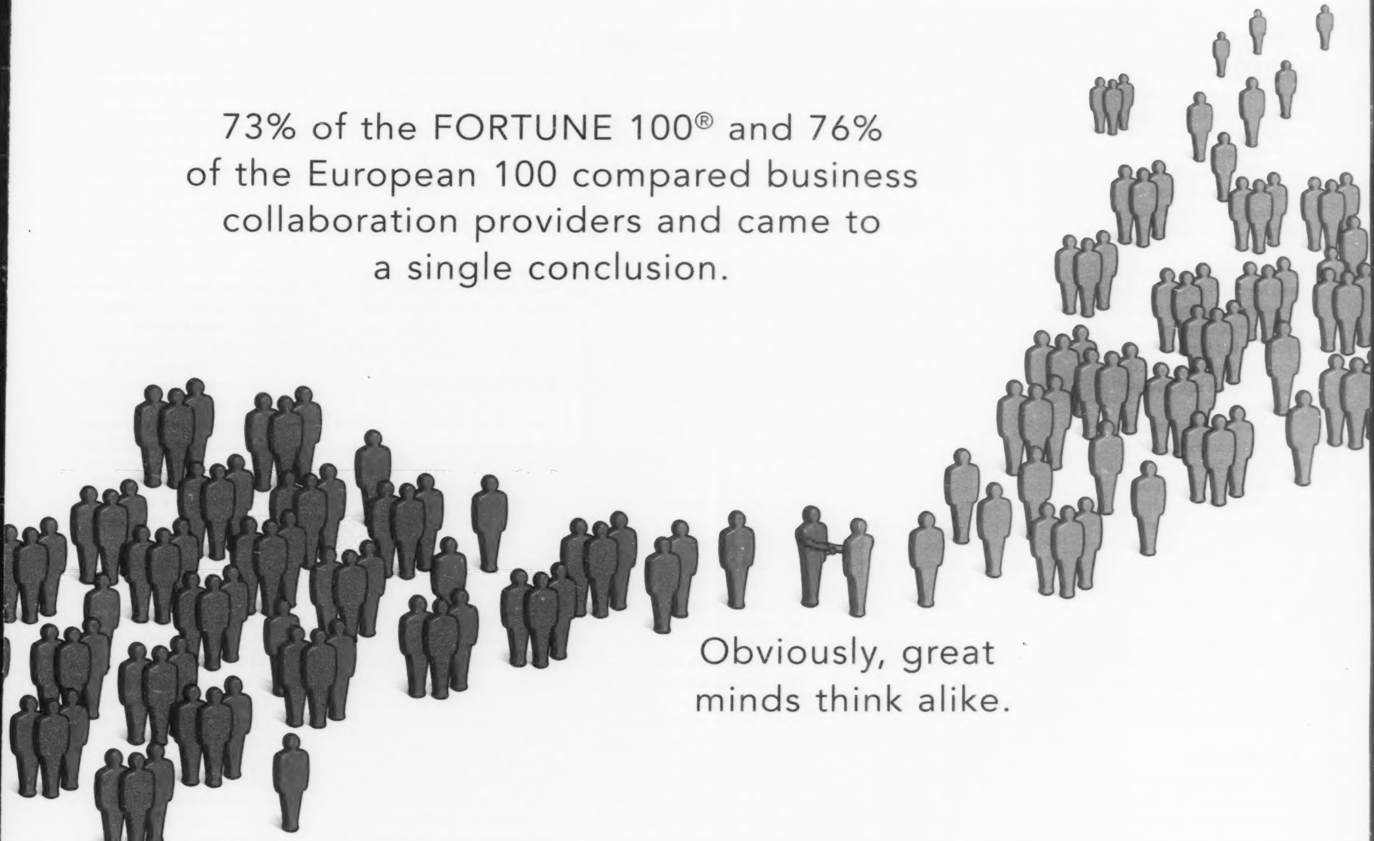
"It's a huge area of pain for our customers, especially those with outsourced manufacturing who are dealing with customers on a global basis," according to Datar.

Proper standardization of the processes can boost efficiency and cut costs for users, he said.

Version 7.0 automates customs warehousing processes, which will help companies to defer or eliminate duty payments, SAP said.

In addition, GTS 7.0 supports adherence to mandatory Automated Export System filing requirements, the company said.

The latest version of GTS is available now. Pricing varies, depending on process scenarios, and takes into account transactional volumes. ▸



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Continued from page 1

Gates

school needs to become a hallowed memory, and new ideas and perspectives should come to the fore," Wanko said.

Gates is "a brilliant strategic thinker [who] revolutionized the industry," said John Halamka, CIO at CareGroup Healthcare System and Harvard Medical School in Boston. "However, it's clear that Microsoft has not competed well with market innovations from Google, Linux and the next generation of thin, Web-based applications."

The software vendor "needs to transform itself, and new leaders in day-to-day operations may create opportunities for radical change," he added.

Ann Harten, vice president of global information systems at office furniture maker Haworth Inc. in Holland, Mich., noted that "a new perspective, with Bill's ongoing guidance, might be a refreshing approach" for Microsoft — particularly if the company's focus shifts to "accurate and usable [product] delivery."

End of an Era

Not everyone among the 25 users contacted by *Computerworld* last week was so upbeat about Gates' plan to relinquish his role as Microsoft's chief software architect. The duties now performed by Gates will be split between Ray Ozzie and Craig Mundie, who both previously held chief technical officer jobs at the company.

Dan Agronow, chief technology officer at The Weather Channel Interactive Inc. in Atlanta, lamented the announcement as "the end of an era."

Gates is "the individual that's the embodiment of Microsoft," Agronow said. "When you think of Microsoft, you think of Bill. I think now Microsoft will be viewed more as a corporate, faceless entity, similar to IBM. I don't see that as good or bad; it's more sad."

However, Agronow predicted that the changes will likely make Microsoft even slower to respond to competitive threats. "I don't see them having the single strong personality that could turn the ship when needed, like when they finally recognized the threat of Netscape," he said.

Gates "is the heart and soul of that company, so I have to believe that his departure would make it something less than it was before," said Chris Hubbell, a software systems engineer at Westar Energy Inc. in Topeka, Kan. The planned transition "makes Microsoft a little less imposing" and potentially more vulnerable to competition, Hubbell said.

"Microsoft is so much Bill Gates in terms of corporate personality," said Rob Enderle, an analyst at Enderle Group in San Jose.

But Enderle noted that Ozzie was hired last year, when he sold Groove Networks to Microsoft, with the intent that he eventually would step into Gates' role as chief software architect. Gates likely judged that Ozzie had performed to his satisfaction and that "it was a matter of pulling the trigger and letting it happen," Enderle said.

He also pointed to delays in the development of Microsoft's upcoming Windows Vista operating system as a possible contributing factor.

The Vista problems may have prompted Gates to "think it was time to make the transition," Enderle said. "Bill was a bit more distracted from the chief architect role than he should have been."

As part of the plan Microsoft announced last Thursday, Ozzie, who, like Gates, is 50 years old, took on the title of chief software architect. The company said Ozzie will work "side by side" with Gates on technical architecture and product oversight matters during the transition period.

New Responsibilities

Mundie, 56, was given the new title of chief research and strategy officer and will gradually take over responsibility for the company's research and technology incubation efforts from Gates. In addition, Mundie will work with Brad Smith, Microsoft's general counsel, to lead its intellectual property and technology policy initiatives.

David Smith, an analyst at Gartner Inc., said Microsoft faces a changing technology landscape and needs to reinvent itself to accommodate IT trends such as the delivery of software as a service and the development of so-called Web 2.0 applications.

Gates has led Microsoft's responses to major market challenges in the past. In particular, he wrote a legendary 1995 memorandum titled "Internet Tidal Wave," in which he expounded on how critical e-commerce would become to business survival. But Smith said that Ozzie is better suited to driving major changes than Gates is at this point.

Dave Chacon, a technical services manager at golf equipment maker Ping Inc. in Phoenix, said he thinks Ozzie also will be more willing "to take risks for the sake of the customer" than Gates is.

"I'm hoping that this translates into a company that is focused on providing products with such intrinsic value that there is no need to use customer lock-in techniques," Chacon said. "It always drives me crazy when I have to put up with marginal Product A because of an artificial coupling with valuable Product B."

Schering-Plough's Wanko said he is eagerly anticipating moves in new directions from Microsoft — such as possibly spinning off some of its operations into separate companies.

"I like change — change is good," he said. "And anything that can potentially break up a monopoly, even a de facto one, is always good for consumers and the industry alike." Wanko added that with the planned changes, Microsoft "might get me to take a second look at its portfolio." ▸

MICROSOFT IN TRANSITION

Bill Gates

- **Plans to give up his day-to-day role** at Microsoft in July 2008 to focus more on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- **Will remain chairman** of the company and serve as an adviser on "key development projects."

Ray Ozzie

- **Immediately assumes the title** of chief software architect from Gates.
- Will work side by side with Gates on all **technical architecture and product oversight** responsibilities during the transition.

Craig Mundie

- **Named to the new position** of chief research and strategy officer.
- Will work with Gates to take over responsibility for Microsoft's **research and technology incubation** efforts. Also will take on new legal duties.

Gates Downplays His Role, Plays Up Microsoft's Future

DESPITE THE competitive challenges that Microsoft faces, Bill Gates said last week that the company "is well positioned for success in the years ahead" – even without him in a full-time job after July 2008.

During a teleconference last Thursday, Gates downplayed his involvement in product development during his time as the vendor's chief software architect.

"Any view that the innovation [at Microsoft] comes primarily from me reflects the notion that there has been an overfocus on my contribution," Gates said. "From Office to Windows, SQL Server, Exchange and Xbox – I am not the primary person on any of those things."

Gates said he decided that Microsoft should announce the transition plan to send a clear message that it "is a very serious thing, [and] it is starting now." He added that he and Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer have gone "carefully through the things I actually do – not what is written – and [decided] how those will be taken on" by other executives.

Ballmer said Microsoft "is capable of making a smooth and orderly transition to a new set of technical leaders without missing a beat."

But the software vendor needs "to be relentless in improving our agility as a company," Ballmer noted. "That means ensuring that our products come to market on a timely basis . . . and that our time and energy are focused on customers."

Charles King, an analyst at Pund-IT Research in Hayward, Calif., said Gates is starting to step aside at the same time that Microsoft is preparing to release two "classic old-style" products: its Windows Vista client operating system and a new version of Office, both due for initial shipments later this year.

"In my mind, the market seems to be stepping away from that kind of computing," King said. In addition, King said he questioned whether Gates would be "the guy who is able to lead Microsoft into the new mobile and more virtual kind of world."

Gates plans to relinquish his day-to-day involvement at Microsoft in order to devote more time to his charitable health and education work at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. However, Microsoft said that he will remain as its chairman after the transition period and serve as an adviser on major development projects.

"I don't see a time in the future where I won't be the chairman of the company," Gates said. "I want to have that association my entire life."

– HEATHER HAVENSTEIN, KEN MINGIS AND PATRICK THIBODEAU

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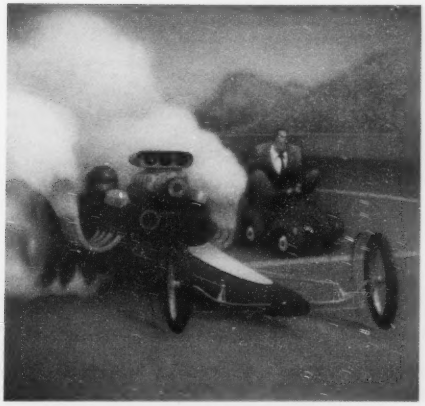
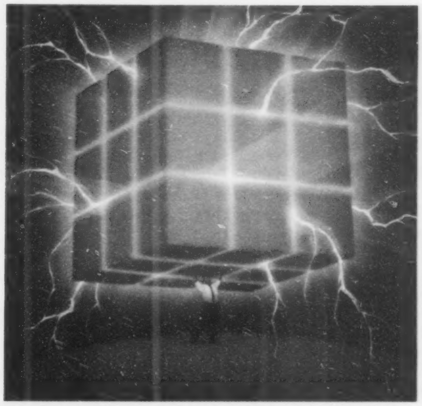


Rapid development with robust objects



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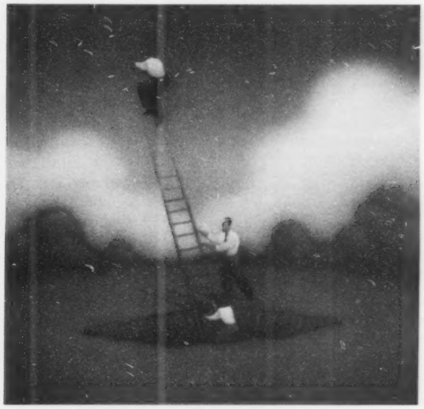

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GLOBALDISPATCHES

An International IT News Digest

African Undersea Cable Project Back on Track

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

SQUABBLES THAT delayed the start of work on the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System have been resolved, allowing the fiber-optic cable project — which is designed to link Africa to global telecommunications networks — to move forward.

At a meeting here this month, information and communications technology ministers from eastern and southern Africa agreed to give all African nations free access to the undersea system, said Sammy Kirui, chairman of the project management team.

The debate over open access had threatened the $200 million (U.S.) project because some member countries wanted to charge other nations for access rights — a position that went against the wishes of African economic development organizations and the World Bank. The Kenyan government announced in May that it was withdrawing support for the project because of the internal wrangling.

At the meeting, though, technology ministers from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe set a new schedule calling for work on the cable system to begin by September and be completed in the fourth quarter of 2007, Kirui said. The targeted completion date is four months later than previously planned.

Project managers are still evaluating bids from companies that are vying to lay the cable, according to Kirui.

■ MICHAEL MALAKATA, IDG NEWS SERVICE

Trade Group to Test Skills of Job Seekers

BANGALORE, INDIA

THE NATIONAL Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) has created a test that's designed to determine the technical and communication skills of applicants for jobs in India's outsourcing industry.

Nasscom officials said that the online test can be used to screen out applicants who lack skills needed by call center, business process outsourcing (BPO) and software services companies with operations in India.

The Delhi-based trade group estimates that only about 25% of technical school graduates and 10% to 15% of college graduates have the skills needed by outsourcing vendors, said Nasscom President Kiran Karnik. The problem is becoming acute because outsourcers are now hiring about 200,000 staffers each year, he added.

The test, which was developed with help from the country's outsourcing vendors, grades applicants on seven parameters, including analytical and communication skills, according to Karnik.

Nasscom plans to roll out the test nationwide by November. The group said that more than 90% of India's software services, BPO and call center companies have signed up to take part in the program.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

GLOBAL FACT

36%, 75%

The percentages of Asian software developers who are using Java Platform Extended Edition 5 and Microsoft .Net, respectively. Two-thirds expect to be using Java by next year.

BASE: MAY SURVEY OF MORE THAN 400 DEVELOPERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION
SOURCE: EVANS DATA CORP., SANTA CRUZ, CALIF.

Europe Plans Broader Internet Access

RIGA, LATVIA

NEARLY THREE-DOZEN European governments pledged last week to do more to spread Internet access to citizens who could be left behind by rapid technological advances.

Government ministers from 34 European countries agreed at a meeting here that they would use IT to help the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed overcome obstacles to Internet use. The represented nations included the European Union's 25 members, plus Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EU is separately aiming by 2010 to halve the number of people with no Internet access, boost the reach of broadband services into rural areas and ensure that all government Web sites are accessible to the public. That effort is part of the EU's i2010 strategy, the digital economy component of a wider initiative to boost employment and business growth and spur innovation.

■ PAUL MELLER, IDG NEWS SERVICE

Intel's India Unit Faces Scrutiny on Expenses

BANGALORE, INDIA

INTEL CORP.'S development center in India has come under scrutiny as part of the company's effort to cut worldwide spending by $1 billion (U.S.).

Intel currently employs more than 3,000 workers in India, including about 2,900 engineers and 100 sales and marketing staffers. But the semiconductor maker said it has initiated an efficiency program in India and other countries to evaluate ways to reduce costs.

In a statement, Intel's subsidiary in Bangalore said that the company "is seeking to improve significantly not just in costs, but in the essentials — what we do and how we do it." The statement noted that the program will cut the company's worldwide workforce through attrition, redeployment and business changes.

A spokeswoman for Intel India declined to say whether there will be job cuts at the unit. Details of Intel's plans for the Indian operations will be disclosed in July, she said.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

Capgemini to Double Its Workforce in India

BANGALORE, INDIA

CAPGEMINI SA plans to double its workforce in India over the next 18 months and make the country its hub for delivering offshore IT and BPO services to corporate users.

"In terms of ability to scale number of staff and everything else, I don't think any other country can offer what India can," Aruna Jayanthi, vice president of outsourcing at Bangalore-based Capgemini India, said in an interview here earlier this month. The Indian subsidiary has about 4,600 staffers now and plans to increase its head count to 6,000 by year's end and to 10,000 by the end of 2007, Jayanthi said.

Paris-based Capgemini has offshore service-delivery centers in other countries, such as China and Poland. But the Indian operation is its largest offshore unit and has already grown by 80% annually over the past two years, Jayanthi said. She added that about 60% of the work done in India is for U.S. customers.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

Compiled by Mike Bucken.

Briefly Noted

Energex Ltd., an electric utility in Brisbane, Australia, has inked a contract worth 7 million Australian dollars ($5.18 million U.S.) with IT services firm TUSC Computer Systems Pty. in Melbourne. TUSC, a unit of LM Ericsson Telephone Co., will implement a workforce management system from Mobile Data Solutions Inc. in Richmond, British Columbia, to automate Energex's field force operations.

■ SANDRA ROSSI, COMPUTERWORLD TODAY (AUSTRALIA)

Wipro Ltd. in Bangalore, India, has agreed to acquire Saraware Oy, a Rovaniemi, Finland-based company that offers design and engineering services to telecommunications carriers, for €25 million ($31 million U.S.). Wipro said the acquisition will give it skills related to radio networks and secure mobile communications platforms that conform to the European-developed Terrestrial Trunked Radio standard, or Tetra.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

ICICI OneSource Ltd., a business process outsourcing vendor in Mumbai, India, is setting up two service delivery centers in Northern Ireland. The company last week said that it plans to open the first center in Belfast next month and begin operations at the second facility by year's end. The two centers are expected to create a total of about 1,000 jobs over the next two years, according to ICICI OneSource.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

Unibanco Holdings SA, a banking company in São Paolo, Brazil, has signed an IT infrastructure outsourcing services contract with Unisys Corp. Unisys said the five-year deal has a potential value of $47 million (U.S.). The contract calls for Unisys to provide management and support services for Unibanco's retail banking infrastructure.

Karvy Global Services Ltd., a business process outsourcing firm in Hyderabad, India, said it will offer customers free online monitoring and measurement of its service delivery. Karvy's offering uses technology from MetrixLine Inc., a Sunnyvale, Calif.-based developer of tools that provide real-time measurements of outsourced processes.

■ JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

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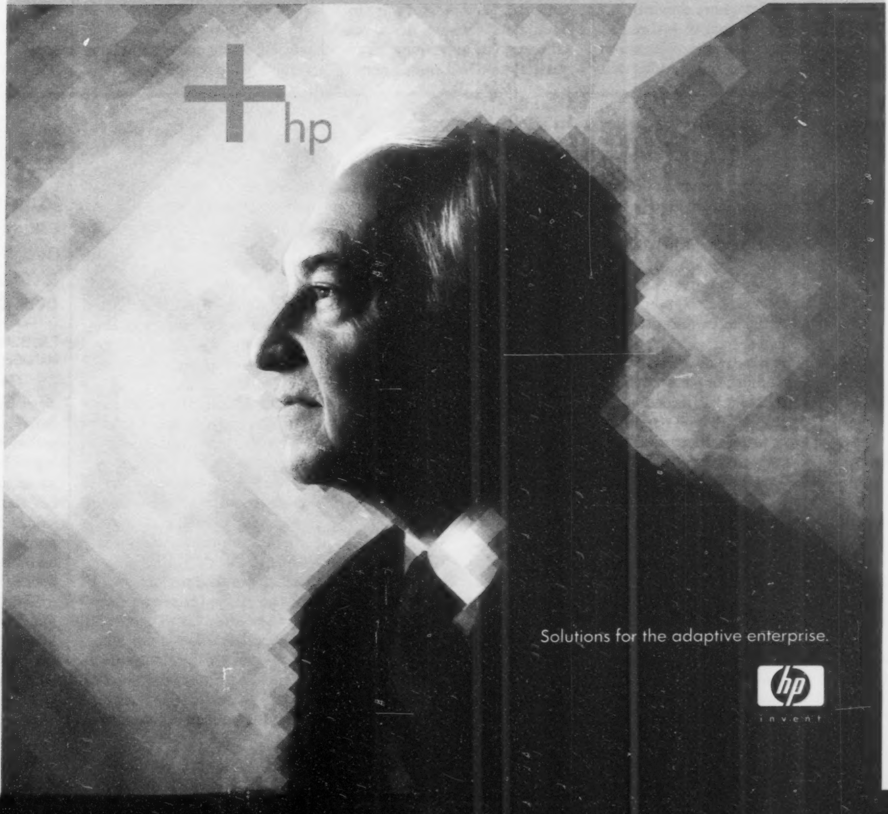
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Microsoft Security Chief Outlines Plans for Vista

BY ROBERT McMILLAN

BEN FATHI was named corporate vice president of Microsoft Corp.'s security technology unit in March. With his promotion from general manager for storage and high availability in Microsoft's Windows division, Fathi gained responsibility for responding to hacker threats and for laying out the company's overall security strategy for the highly anticipated Vista and Windows Server Longhorn products. In an interview with the IDG News Service last week, Fathi spoke about Vista's security issues and his overall long-range plans in the new role.

How do you respond to some beta-tester complaints that Vista's security features are making it too hard to use? A lot of the comments that you've seen in blogs and articles are centered around User Account Control, and we took a lot of those comments to heart. We have talked to enterprise customers, and we have talked to consumers. And for Beta 2, we've significantly reduced the number of dialogs.

We also did something that I just announced [last week]: the ActiveX installation service. This is something we've heard from our enterprise customers. They want to have the ability for an administrator to have [a Microsoft Management Console] where they can approve internal Web sites or partner company Web sites and list the applications that can basically be white-listed. We have done that, and that will be available in [Release Candidate 1].

I agree with you that there's a certain amount of annoyance, but you can expect that with any product that's in beta, and we are committed to significantly improving the usability of this.

Over the long term, does Microsoft plan to include all required security capabilities in the operating system? If you look at OneCare [Microsoft's security offering], for example, OneCare is not just about security. It's about management; it's about taking over a consumer's machine and helping them in every way we can with everything from antivirus and antispyware to automatic backups, doing performance tuning, doing patch installation and simplifying the overall management of that system. You're going to see complete management and simplification solutions from us, and one aspect of that is going to be security. Whether it's a big aspect or a small aspect is going to change over time.

Some of those pieces of functionality will eventually make it into the OS, and we're going to look for other things we can do in a management solution to simplify people's lives.

Do you really think that it's going to be necessary to sell stand-alone security products in five years? I don't know. We'll let the customers decide. That's what it's all about. Let them have the choice and see what their feedback is, and continue to innovate in those spaces.

What would you like to have achieved a year from now as head of the security group? One of the areas that I'm really passionate about in security is what we call a trust ecosystem. What I mean by that is taking security from where it is today, where it's viewed by a lot of customers as a defensive technology — it's seen as a way of blocking bad things from happening on your machine — and taking that and turning it around into a technology that really enables you to do things securely and seamlessly without having fear. So you can take things like documents and share them with your friends and family or with workers in other companies securely. We've made a lot of investments in that space, such as Active Directory Federation Services and Rights Management Services. We've made the first steps, but we need to take that a long way, both in the consumer space and in the enterprise space.

I don't know if we're going to have something a year from now. But that's something that, as we look at post-Vista planning, I've been pushing the team to look at and invest in heavily. ◆

McMillan is a reporter for the IDG News Service.

Nortel to Offer Bundled IP Telephony Systems

BY MATT HAMBLEN

Nortel Networks Corp. last week unveiled a new IP telephony (IPT) initiative that offers standard packages of hardware and software that promise to cut customers' upfront costs by up to 30%.

The IPT 1-2-3 program aims to simplify the purchase process for large North American companies in order to stimulate upgrades from traditional telephony offerings to IP-based systems, said Nortel officials.

Jay Lassman, an analyst at Gartner Inc. in Stamford, Conn., said the program could give Nortel a much-needed boost as it tries to spur lagging IP telephony sales. "Nortel has given such attractive prices on [traditional circuit-switched gear] versus IPT that they've really lost ground in that IPT space as a result," he said.

One longtime Nortel customer, T.R. Bowlin, infrastructure manager at Power Engineers Inc. in Hailey, Idaho, was briefed on the new program. He said it can help corporations gradually upgrade telephony systems, making the process easier than replacing all of the older systems at once.

"I've found with Nortel, you don't have to do a forklift upgrade and completely turn over your network to a vendor to do voice over IP," said Bowlin. "A lot of firms want to do what we did, which is do VoIP over time, and my understanding is that's how IPT 1-2-3 will work."

Power Engineers, a diversified engineering firm, has about 300 Nortel IP phones, another 400 circuit-switched phones and related IP switching gear at 18 domestic and three foreign offices.

Bowlin estimated that his company has spent $1.3 million on Nortel communications products over six years. About half of that spending has already been recouped because of savings resulting from the use of IP telephony systems. He said that conference call charges of up to $14,000 per month using AT&T Inc. services were eliminated with a $140,000 investment in a Nortel MCS 5100 server. Bowlin also noted that Power Engineers has realized some savings on toll calls that are now conducted over VoIP phones.

He said he expects that Power Engineers' total Nortel investment will pay for itself in two to three years.

Keeping It Simple

Vendors have traditionally sold VoIP systems in custom-built packages. Nortel's new program relies on standard preconfigured packages of all the components needed for a new system, explained Diane Schmidt, director of IP telephony marketing at Nortel. She would not provide details of the systems and said pricing has yet to be determined.

"Going from a legacy voice system to IP is relatively complex," Schmidt said. "There's quite a bit of engineering. Every vendor has had a customized approach, but customers needed it to be simpler."

Schmidt said the packaged systems can be installed for "as much as 30% less" than most customized systems.

Nortel's partners will use sales and support software to help customers find the right configuration for their operations, she said.

Schmidt said packages can be created based on the number of expected users and the applications needed. The basic package for converting a Meridian 1 time division multiplexer switch (a traditional circuit-switched network design) would include a new IP core processor, IP phones, a software release, a networking switch and related gear, all packaged with one part number and one price, Schmidt said. Additional phones and prepackaged applications could be added to the basic package, she said.

Lassman said there's no guarantee that Nortel's IPT 1-2-3 program will prove successful, and he questioned whether the vendor can "literally deliver plug-and-play IP telephony, including software." ◆

> **I've found with Nortel, you don't have to do a forklift upgrade and completely turn over your network to a vendor to do voice over IP.**
>
> **T.R. BOWLIN,** INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGER, POWER ENGINEERS INC.

Government Managers Resist Telecommuting Plans

BY GRANT GROSS
WASHINGTON

Top managers are holding back the spread of telecommuting at some government agencies, several officials said during a panel discussion earlier this month.

For government agencies to fully realize the benefits of telecommuting, such top managers need to change their attitudes, said Wendell Joice, head of the U.S. General Services Administration's governmentwide telework team.

"We are hampered by constantly having to beg and plead," said Joice, speaking at a conference called Continuity of Operations Planning in the Federal Government and Industry: Enabling a Mobile Workforce in Times of Crisis. The event, held here, was sponsored by iPass Inc., RSA Security Inc. and research firm Input Inc.

Advocates of telecommuting said it can provide several benefits to employers, including the ability to continue operations during a national disaster or terrorist attack. Telecommuting can also help ease traffic problems in major cities, reduce pollution and increase worker productivity, advocates said.

Benefits Questioned

Nonetheless, some managers remain unconvinced about such potential benefits and about their ability to adequately supervise teleworkers, said James Lewis, a senior fellow and director of the Technology and Public Policy Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"I don't want to dismiss the managers who have concerns here," he said. "What do we need to do to make them happy?"

For example, Lewis said, some of them have cited studies showing that potential savings from telework may not apply to government agencies, which have to give excess funding back to the federal general budget. He also noted that some government agency managers question studies suggesting that teleworkers are more productive.

Embracing telework doesn't have to be hard, said Jack Penkoske, director of manpower, personnel and security at the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), which must move its base 28 miles from Northern Virginia to Fort Meade in Maryland under military base realignment plans. The agency is allowing more people to telecommute, but it would have done that with or without the move, he said.

The DISA plan aims to accommodate employees and boost recruitment of new workers, Penkoske said. ▶

Gross is a reporter for the IDG News Service.

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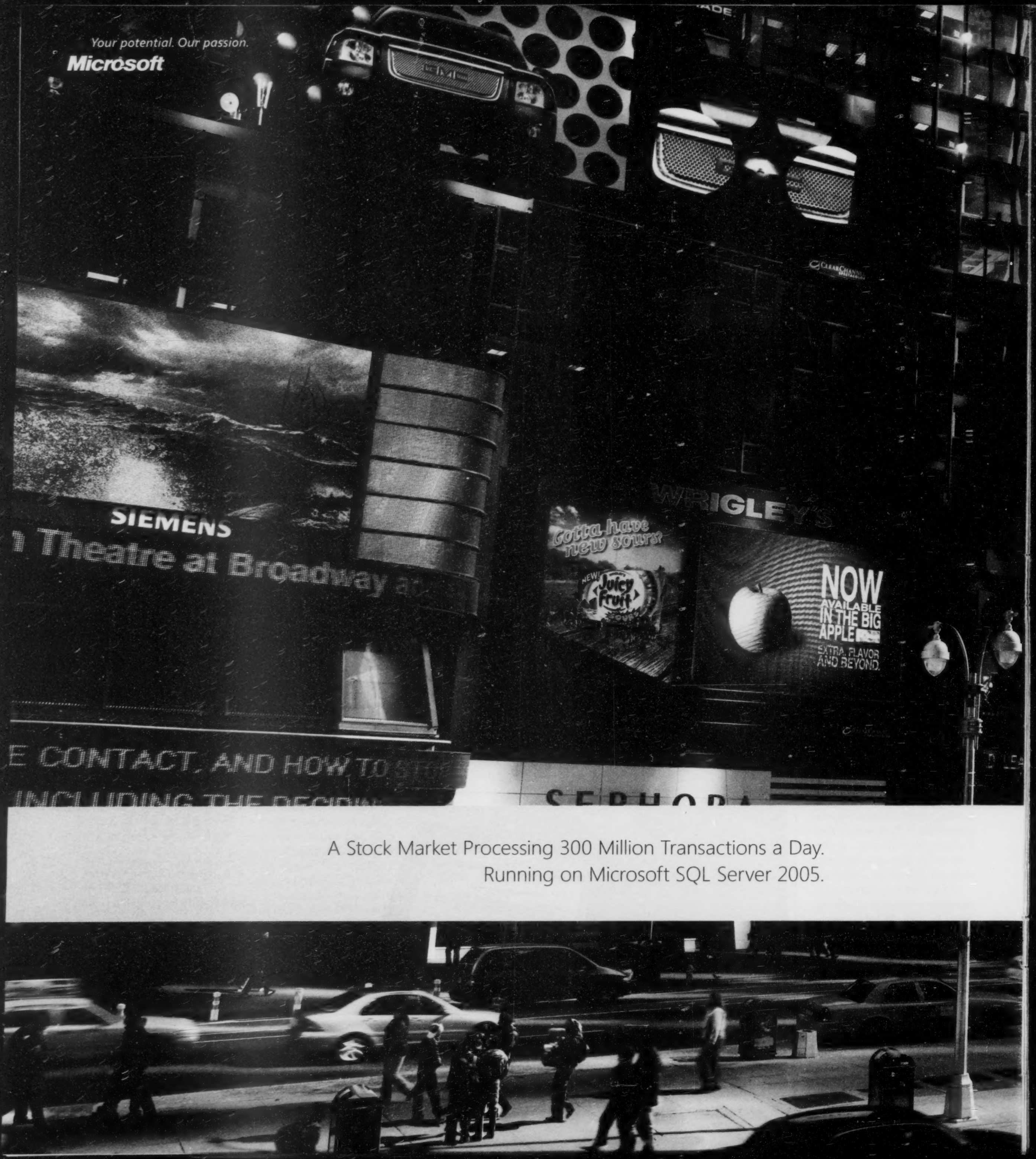

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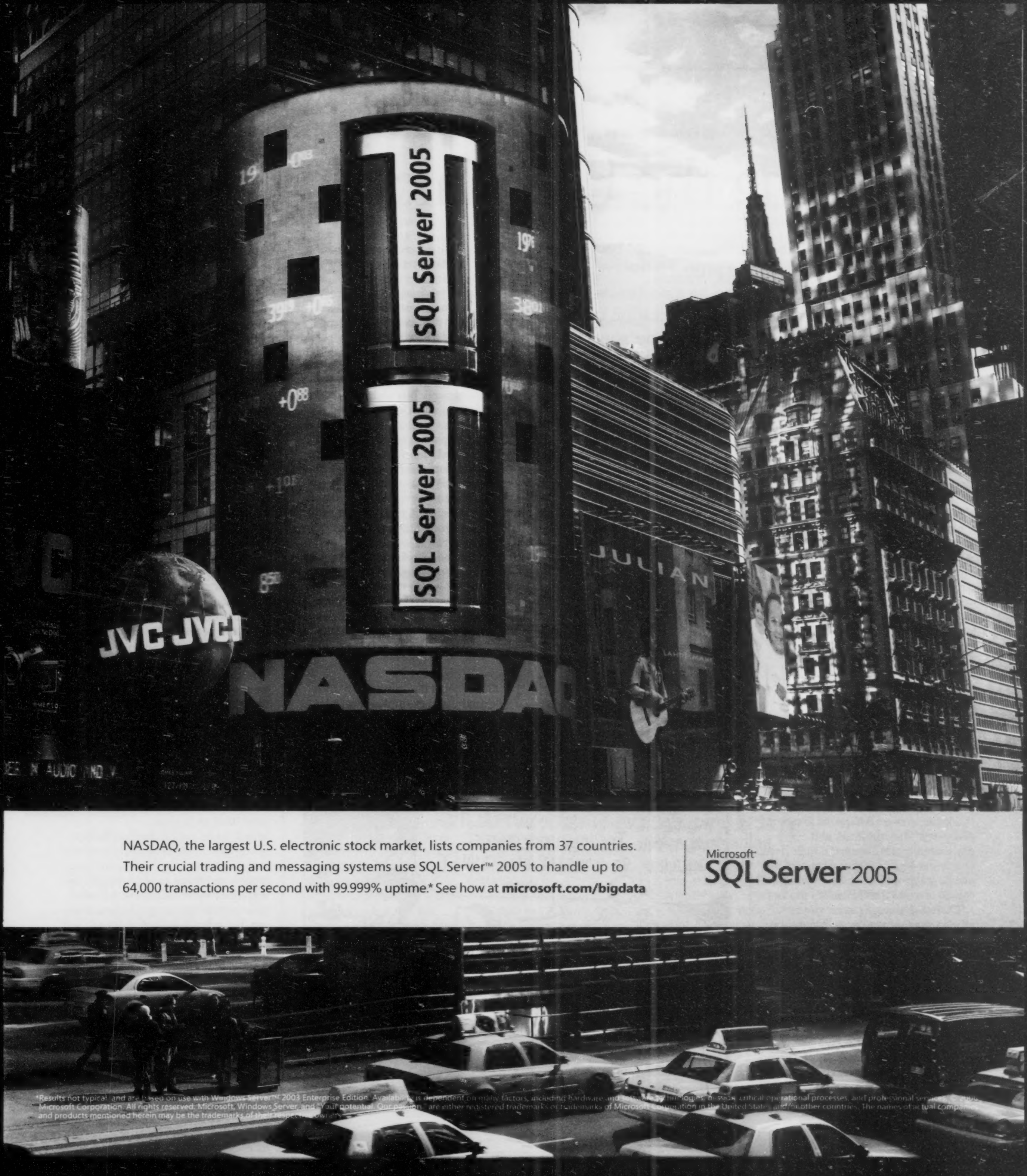

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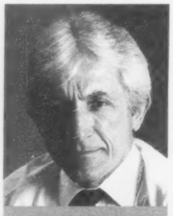
OPINION

DON TENNANT

Thinking the Unthinkable

A WISCONSIN LAW that went into effect last week would probably be considered by most people to be a no-brainer. The law prohibits the implantation of any kind of microchip into a person's body without his consent. Who could fault legislation that serves as a proactive measure to safeguard personal privacy in the face of emerging intrusive identification and tracking technologies?

I could. And here's why.



DON TENNANT is editor in chief of *Computerworld*. Contact him at **don_tennant@computerworld.com.**

A few weeks ago, at a dinner during *Computerworld*'s Mobile & Wireless World conference in Orlando, I had the privilege of being seated next to one of the Best Practices award winners. In the course of our dinner conversation, we were talking about our kids, and he told me that he lost his teenage daughter in a car accident not too long ago. She had fallen asleep at the wheel. "Every parent's worst nightmare," he said.

"That's not my worst nightmare," I told him. "My worst nightmare is for one of my kids to go missing and to never be found." He understood and nodded. Not knowing would be maddening.

Losing a child in any sense is unthinkable, and yet it happens to parents every day. They think about it every day thereafter for the rest of their lives. Our worst nightmares can happen. So maybe we should think about what we can do to avoid that before it's too late.

There's nothing a parent can really do to prevent a car accident that results in a nightmarish phone call from a police officer. But if my daughter, Shelly, who will be 15 next month, went missing, I'm not sure I'd be able to convince myself that I had done everything in my power to make sure I could get her back.

One day last week, I asked Shelly whether she'd be OK with it if I wanted to have a chip with a tracking capability implanted in her so we could find her if she was ever missing.

"Certainly," she said without hesitation. "Because I trust you." Her caveat: "Parents should only activate it if they really need to." Agreed.

The technology to implant GPS tracking devices in humans certainly exists, as a simple Google search will affirm. But it doesn't appear to be actively marketed or readily available in product form for implanting in children so they can be quickly located if they're lost or abducted.

There's just too much negative publicity surrounding the technology and its privacy ramifications, and the companies involved in its development seem unwilling to run the political and public relations gantlet. That's a shame.

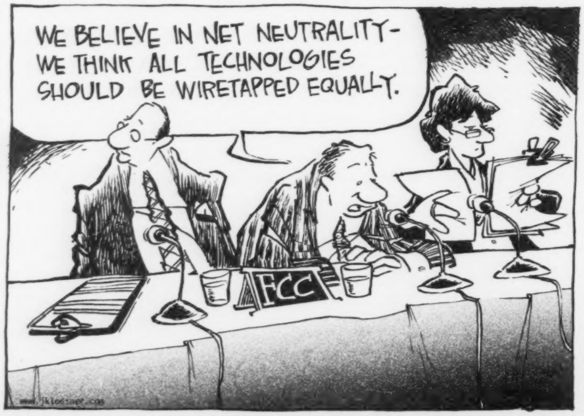
About six years ago, Sun Microsystems Chairman Scott McNealy took a now-famous position on the issue. "If I could embed a locator chip in my child right now, I know I would do that," he said. "Some people call that Big Brother. I call it being a father."

I agreed publicly with McNealy then, and I feel even more strongly about it now. So I was troubled by the fact that an amendment to the Wisconsin bill that provided for an exemption in the case of parents directing an implantation in a minor was revoked before the bill became law. And I'm wary of the precedent set by such preemptive legislation and of the course that other states might take.

For anyone who finds that position unacceptable, I'll tell you what. Find me a parent with a missing child who wouldn't give anything to have had a GPS tracking device implanted in that child, and I'll keep quiet. Make a compelling argument that there's an abducted child who wouldn't feel the same way, and I'll shut up.

Until then, I'll be a vocal advocate of thinking the unthinkable and doing something about it. ◗

Don Tennant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BRUCE A. STEWART

Speaking the Language of Success

HAVE YOU ever uttered the words, "The user just won't get it"? If you have, then pay attention, because there is a way to sell any IT investment that's worthwhile to your users. It's called "speaking their language" — and that language involves money and risk, not technology.

This sounds so obvious as to be trite, but I remain utterly surprised that I keep running into two types of clients: IT professionals who are convinced that users won't pay for anything (so they never start the conversation) and IT professionals who keep trying to sell technology rather than business-related value.

BRUCE A. STEWART is a former CEO and onetime senior vice president and director of executive services at Meta Group Inc. He is now an executive adviser in Vancouver, British Columbia. He can be contacted at **bruce@bastewart.com**.

If you're going to talk money and risk, you have to do a few things that may be foreign to you. Relax, though; this isn't rocket science. It's just something your vendors won't usually be good at packaging for you. You'll have to do a little work on your own.

First, remember that you get only a limited amount of time to sell any idea. You're busy, aren't you? Well, so is your client. So do your homework before going in to make your pitch. Yes, you can set the stage in casual conversation — and if you're not a regular coffee buddy with your client, become one so that you can spark some interest. But when you have an idea to sell, you need a formal meeting.

Second, what are the client's main objections? There are only four possibilities: I don't trust you; I don't think this is urgent; I have no time right now to do my side of this; and I have no money left. Although you may hear different words than these, all of your client's objections will come down to one or more of these — and technology isn't one of them. Third, you have to overcome these objections.

Trust is created by spending time, executing well and expressing an honest interest in the client's affairs. This is best done in casual but regular interaction. Once you have built up trust, the other objections start to fall much more easily.

You create urgency by talking about risk. Remember that there's a risk in not doing something, as well as in taking action. Someone whose application isn't on the hot recovery list, for example, is at risk; perhaps your proposed change overcomes the need to use traditional disaster recovery means. Doing a little research about what other companies are doing in your client's domain can also help: Are you missing out on something important that will be hard to catch up on later?

The time issue, unfortunately, is real in business today, but there is always time for things that are wanted badly enough. Show your client how to trade off money, risk and time by talking about different strategies. If you offer three strategies, "no" becomes one choice among many. Providing options beyond "yes" and "no" makes the ability to choose between alternatives real for many people.

Finally, the big one: money. Does your suggestion generate revenue to offset costs? Does it save money in the long run? Money — the most common objection — is the easiest to deal with if a value proposition is shown.

What all of this boils down to is thinking the way a really good account executive or consultant thinks. The good ones sell value to you. You can sell value to your clients, too — but only if you stop defeating yourself by selling technology alone. ▸

DAVID MOSCHELLA

Consumer Tech Seeping Into IT

THE CONSUMERIZATION of IT continues apace. Over the past two years, I have been watching technology products and services initially developed for consumers and small businesses have an increasingly significant impact on enterprise computing. In fact, I wrote two columns on that topic: "Keeping Up With Your IT Consumers" (Aug. 23, 2004) and "Change at Hand for PC Management" (June 20, 2005).

DAVID MOSCHELLA is global research director at the Leading Edge Forum, a Computer Sciences Corp. company. Contact him at **dmoschella@earthlink.net**.

The two main points I made then still hold true today: 1) Many employees have better IT equipment and services at home than at work, and thus can no longer be treated like children who need to be told what to do, and 2) the public infrastructure that is emerging for consumers is in many ways superior to the private infrastructures typically provided by enterprise IT. Examples include e-mail, storage, wireless, collaboration and a wide range of specific applications. I wrote that the tension generated by the contrast between this ever-more-powerful public infrastructure and the aging private infrastructures of most companies would be one of the defining IT issues of the decade.

Over the past year, these trends have continued to gain traction, and the idea of consumerization has risen in importance and recognition. The following are among the current trends:

- **Cafeteria-style purchasing plans.** Companies are experimenting with giving employees personal technology budgets to better meet their IT needs.
- **Browser-based applications.** The emergence of Asynchronous JavaScript and XML, better known as AJAX, is helping to close the once-large performance gap between client/server and browser-based systems.
- **Consumerized offices.** Large companies with small branches and international offices have been quick to use public infrastructure instead of much more costly private facilities.
- **Collaboration.** Taken together, blogs, RSS, wikis, Google and WebEx are redefining the way enterprise information is gathered, updated and communicated. The costs are radically lower than traditional knowledge management and collaboration tools.
- **Multimedia.** The Apple iPod has rapidly emerged as an inexpensive and friendly way to distribute both audio and, increasingly, video materials across corporate networks.
- **Voice over IP.** As an alternative to expensive companywide VoIP rollouts, many telecommuters, remote office employees and others whose calls may not be a high security concern are using Skype and Vonage.
- **Software as a service.** The success of Salesforce.com is just the most visible sign of a whole new wave of on-demand applications that are often a simple, low-risk way for companies to experiment with new software.
- **Security.** Although the firewall deperimeterization debate rages on, many companies have concluded that it may no longer be useful to distinguish between users inside and outside their firewalls and that strong authentication and encryption over the Internet is really the only long-term individual network-access approach.

That's only a partial list of the many fronts on which consumerization is occurring, but it should be sufficient to give you a sense of the impressive rate of change. The bottom line is that IT organizations must recognize that employees are often keen to experiment with these services and that they're willing to spend their own money. In today's highly competitive marketplace, consumerization can be an important source of innovation and efficiency.

These issues are going to be important, and I'll continue to track them. What's happening in your company? ▸

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READERS' LETTERS

VMs Virtually Battle For Real Resources

IN REGARD to virtual machines ["Getting a Grip on Virtual Machines," May 1], one problem always seems to bubble up when diagnosing issues: Even though the physical machine may meet a software manufacturer's recommendations for CPU and memory, the VM does not necessarily have access to those resources. In the desire to save money on hardware, many IT shops overload their servers with too many VMs, which fight over these resources. As a result, end users complain about poor system performance.

When setting up a VM, it is important that it meet recommendations and have allocated to it the appropriate resources. Not doing so is akin to saying, "Who cares if the manufacturer recommended a minimum setup of a Pentium II at 2 GHz and 4GB of RAM? This old 600-MHz 486 with 1GB should suffice." One key problem in diagnosing these issues often lies in IT not being equipped to properly tell which resources the VM actually has access to as various VMs on the same box potentially fight for the same physical resources. As your article states, there is a need to manage both the virtual and physical servers together to prevent this type of issue from occurring in the first place.

Mark Lawler
Chief technology officer,
ProSight Inc., Portland, Ore.,
e. mark.lawler@prosight.com

Who's No. 1?

SO MONEY magazine and Salary.com rank software engineer as the best job in the U.S. [Career Watch, May 8]. You gotta be kidding! Software engineers face unpredictable hours, work weekends and nights, receive midnight phone calls, have stress and get only fair benefits. We often have no real career path and are abandoned when companies merge. A lot of us consider ourselves trapped!

John R. Carter
Antioch, Ill.,
mr41@comcast.net

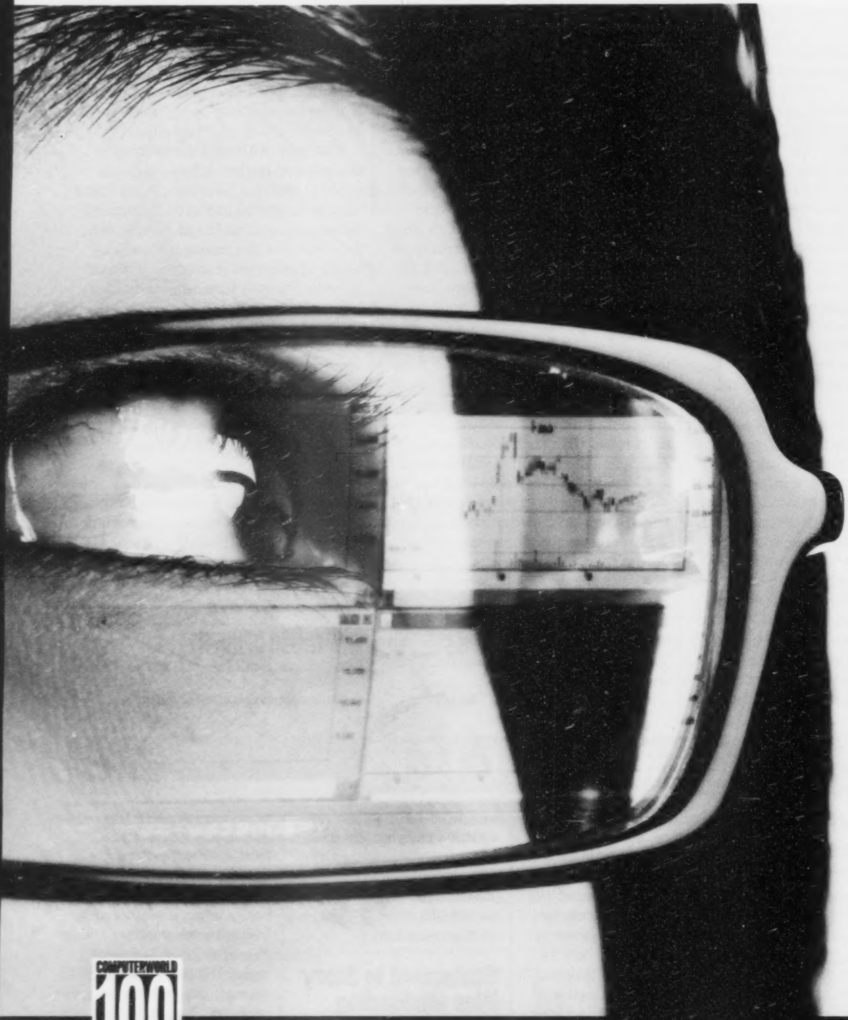
Statement in Story Was Misleading

THE APRIL 3 article "SAS Touts Its Integration, Storage Tools for BI Projects" attributed the following statement to John Enriquez, IT vice president at Pearl River Resort: "The casino operator used SAS integration tools to quickly adjust its marketing plan after Hurricane Katrina to attract customers from hard-hit areas such as Biloxi and Gulfport, Miss., and New Orleans, according to Enriquez."

This statement is untrue. Pearl River Resort never targeted areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. We wholly reject any notion that SAS integration was used to take advantage of victims of the hurricane. It is offensive and false. Pearl River Resort has been using SAS to determine who is visiting, where they are from and which aspects of Pearl River Resort each guest enjoys. This allows us to target our marketing and better serve our guests. Our partnership effort with SAS has been a success in that regard.

Chuck Miller
President and CEO, Pearl
River Resort, Choctaw, Miss.

COMPUTERWORLD welcomes comments from its readers. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity. They should be addressed to Jamie Eckle, letters editor, Computerworld, PO Box 9171, 1 Speen Street, Framingham, Mass. 01701. Fax: (508) 879-4843. E-mail: letters@computerworld.com. Include an address and phone number for immediate verification.



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SPECIAL REPORT

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The Top Spot: Quicken Loans
By building applications instead of buying them, this online mortgage lender gets the systems it wants and IT workers get their hands on homegrown technology. That approach helped launch the company to the No. 1 spot for the second year in a row. PAGE 34

The 100 Best
A list of this year's Best Places to Work in IT, plus rankings for the tops in diversity, training, retention and other areas. PAGE 50

Best Balance
How do companies distribute sexy technology assignments while making sure someone keeps the day-to-day systems working? Or avoid the urge to overhire while keeping up with business growth? Here's how the Best Places make everyday balancing acts work. PAGE 72

13th ANNUAL REPORT

100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2006

Technologists at these companies are recognized as both creators and co-workers. When they propose ideas, their companies listen – and act.

BY MARY BRANDEL

"We try to create an environment where you can be not just a great technologist, but you can also use your right-brain, empathetic, creative side, says Cathy Brune, chief technology officer at Allstate, pictured here with Willy Anderson, infrastructure services senior manager.

DAVID JOEL

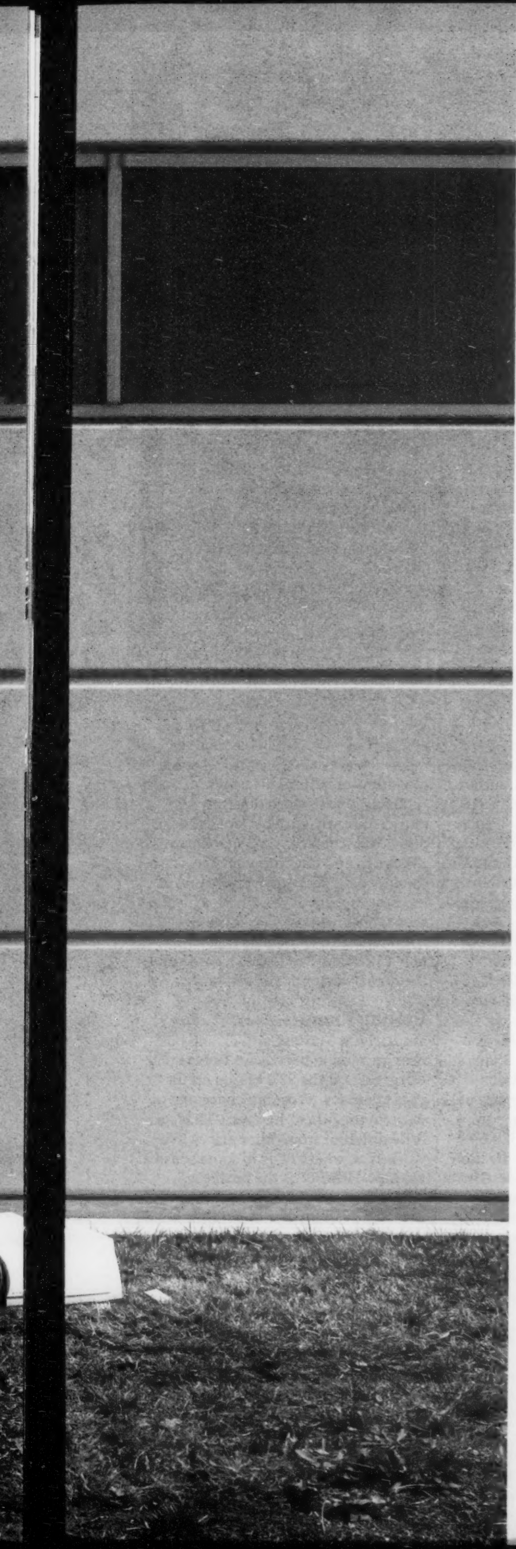
WILLY ANDERSON remembers the day he realized the human impact of the work he does at Allstate Insurance Co. When he started as an intern at the insurance giant at the age of 19, Anderson was responsible for maintaining the company's claims loss reporting system. As part of that job, he listened in on a call that the claim center received from a woman who had just been in a car accident.

"She was crying because her husband was trapped in the car, and she wasn't sure if he was alive," says Anderson, now infrastructure services senior manager at the $33.9 billion insurer, which ranks No. 62 on *Computerworld*'s 2006 Best Places to Work in IT list. "My work took on a whole new meaning after that. When you see how the claims reps can and can't touch the client when the system goes down, you realize you're in IT because of the promise Allstate sells its customers, not just because of your skill level with a given technology."

Just as important, Anderson later shared his eye-opening experience with all of his direct reports, who thereafter also got a chance to listen in on claims calls. Their ability to appreciate the way Allstate touches its customers' lives — along with Anderson's own freedom to institute that kind of

Continued on page 30

[1] IBM System p5 and eServer™ p5 servers hold the number one position in over 70 benchmarks. For details, visit ibm.com/systems/p/benchmarks. [2] Based on IBM TPC-C result of 1,025,169 tpmC at $4.42/tpmC on a 16-core (8 processors, 32 threads) 2.2 GHz IBM System p5 570 (configuration planned to be available 5/31/06) compared to HP TPC-C result of 332,265 tpmC at $4.48/tpmC on a 16-core (16 processors, 16 threads) 1.6 GHz rx8620 running Windows® Server 2003 Datacenter Edition (configuration available 7/15/05). For details, visit www.tpc.org. IBM, the IBM logo, System p5 and Take Back Control are trademarks or registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. UNIX is a registered trademark of The Open Group in the United States and other countries. Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others. © 2006 IBM Corporation. All rights reserved.



IBM

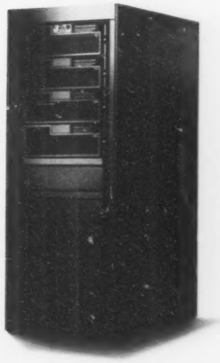
_THE INVASION

_DAY 13: These underpowered boxes are killing us. They can't handle the workloads. They can't handle the transactions. They can't handle the growing number of users. And I for sure can't handle the costs.

_I'm putting all this junk out where it belongs and buying some real servers.

_DAY 15: I've taken back control by moving to the IBM System p™ platform. It's number one in over 70 leading benchmarks.[1] Take transaction processing for instance — the System p5 570 processes three times as many transactions per minute as the HP rx8620! And its price/performance is better.[2] It's all I ever wanted in a UNIX® server.

_As for the old servers, well...they kept crashing. Into the ground.



IBM.COM/**TAKEBACKCONTROL**/p5

BY THE NUMBERS

The Typical Best Place

$10.5B	In revenue
78	Years in business
32,001	Total number of employees
1,052	Total number of IT employees
34%	Percentage of IT staff members who are women
32%	Percentage of IT managers who are women
25%	Percentage of IT staff members who are minorities
15%	Percentage of IT managers who are minorities
$295M	IT budget
$1,943	Spent per IT employee on training
7	Training days offered annually for IT staff
42	Hours in the average workweek
90%	Have budgeted for salary increases for IT employees in 2006, by 4% on average
76%	Have budgeted for bonuses for IT employees in 2006

YOU WANT PERKS?

They've Got Perks

AT KENNAMETAL, IT employees attend a summer meeting at the Latrobe Country Club, home course of golf legend Arnold Palmer. In addition to the meeting, they enjoy a day of golf, entertainment by magicians, comedians or mind readers, and an opportunity to meet Palmer.

At Allstate Insurance, new parents – including those whom Allstate has helped financially to adopt children – get free car seats as part of the company's Buckle Up Baby program.

Salaried employees at L.L. Bean get up to five paid days to participate in activities its products are designed for, such as hunting, fishing, kayaking and cycling.

Northwestern Mutual sponsors 31 employee clubs that offer activities such as running, skiing, biking, gardening, fishing and bowling. The company subsidizes the clubs with $300,000 in annual funding.

MasterCard recently built a new physical fitness center on its campus in St. Louis, which also houses a wellness center, a company store, a carwash and a beauty salon.

Marriott International recognizes above-and-beyond performance levels with free stays at one of its hotels anywhere in the country.

– MARY BRANDEL

Continued from page 27

change — are both key ways in which the company makes individuals in IT know that their work matters, he says.

It may seem difficult to believe that in this age where "employer" and "loyalty" don't often appear in the same sentence, employees of companies on this year's Best Places list agree that a big reason their firms deserve that ranking is because they foster a culture that nourishes not just their careers, but the human beings pursuing those careers as well. In fact, in our survey of more than 27,000 IT workers at this year's Best Places, 80% said their jobs are both interesting and challenging.

"Salaries are a good thing, but it's all about the feeling on the part of the employee that they're part of the whole experience," says Dennis Foster, vice president of enterprise technology planning and engineering and architecture at Washington-based Marriott International Inc., No. 19 on the list.

Or as Cathy Brune, chief technology officer at Allstate, puts it, it's about encouraging employees to bring "the whole person" to work. "We try to create an environment where you can be not just a great technologist — which is the left-brain, logical side — but you can also use your right-brain, empathetic, creative side." That means recognizing that IT people need to feel valued, stretch their capabilities, be part of a community and lead a life outside of work.

Best Places do this in myriad ways, such as making technology a vital part of the business strategy, fostering strong intracompany relationships, seeking and responding to feedback for improved work/life balance, enabling the flow of ideas and helping employees keep up with fast-changing technology.

And there are other reasons why employees of these companies showed high satisfaction levels this year. Just 37% of the companies experienced IT layoffs, versus 43% the year before. Hiring is up, salaries are expected to climb, and the majority of companies will issue bonuses (see chart at left). And although employee satisfaction with morale and salaries stayed virtually the same, the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their jobs are secure rose from 68% to 71% this year.

Seeing the Purpose

There's no doubt that technology staffers want to work with leading-edge technology, and many of the companies on the list meet that criteria. For instance, MasterCard International Inc., which ranks No. 34, is implementing an MPLS-based global network, and Allstate has based its application infrastructure on a service-oriented architecture.

But there's more to cool projects than just technology, says Paul Glen, author of *Leading Geeks* (Jossey-Bass, 2002) and a *Computerworld* columnist. "People want to work on something interesting, and that can happen because of the technology itself, their peers, the role they're playing or because there's an interesting outcome to the project," he says.

For Sharp HealthCare, which ranks 77 on the list, technology projects are inextricably linked to "the Sharp experience," which encompasses the company's efforts to create a great environment for its staff, physicians and patients. A case in point is Sharp's work in recent years to become an early user of wireless-enabled computerized intravenous pumps. The pumps incorporate customized control tables that regulate the amount of medication that gets administered to patients. By integrating them with the organization's 802.11-based wireless network, Sharp's IT staff enabled those control tables to be easily updated, and data can be quickly extracted for safety reviews and administrative purposes.

"At the time the pump was invented, no one else had done that," says Bill Spooner, senior vice president and CIO at the San Diego-based nonprofit health care organization. "It was clearly recognized as leading-edge from a patient safety standpoint."

Meanwhile, at Allstate, the importance of technology gets high visibility every day, whether at corporate meetings, when senior leaders interact with employees via streaming media and Web conferencing, or out in the field, when wireless tools enable mobile-response units to efficiently respond to victims of natural disasters.

"Being able to work remotely and more efficiently with better desktop tools, Web conferencing, mobile applications and streaming media is continually cited by employees as one of the best aspects of working at Allstate," says Carolyn Sitkiewicz, director of IT communications. It helps that two senior IT leaders at Allstate have seats on the management board, she adds.

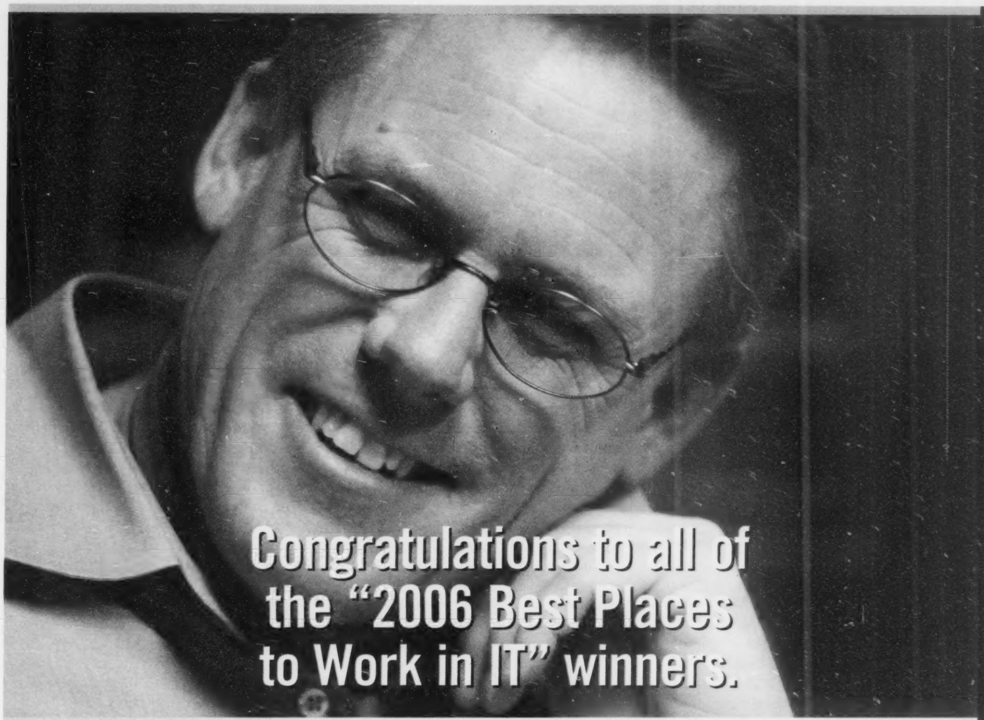
Getting Along

Similarly, at MasterCard, IT and business go hand in hand, says Robert Reeg, CTO at the $2.2 billion credit card company. "You can't have one without the other," he says. "That's a little different from other places I've worked at, where IT is in some sense a sideline. Here, IT *is* the business."

Just the same, MasterCard recently invested even further in building solid relationships between IT and the rest of the business. It established the new position of "technology liaison," appointing more than 60 people globally to play this role in its major business units. "It will help us work with our business partners to provide them with the right services," Reeg says.

This type of relationship-building effort is another trait shared among this year's Best Places. In fact, 95% of respondents said they enjoy good re-

Continued on page 32



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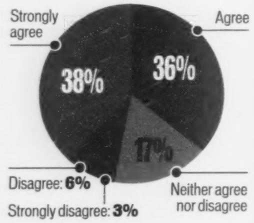
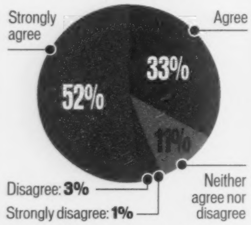
BY THE NUMBERS

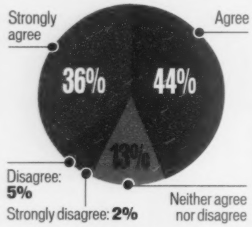
My company is a great place to work in IT.



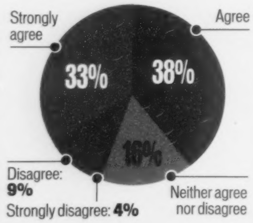
I am proud to work for my company.



My job is interesting and challenging.



I feel my job is secure.



Continued from page 30

lationships with their co-workers. At Northwestern Mutual (No. 15), employees get to know one another over free lunches in the cafeteria and through company-subsidized clubs.

At Marriott, global IT field representatives are sent out to visit hotels and reservation centers to discover business issues, alert end users to new initiatives and ensure that service levels are acceptable. IT staffers periodically work at reservation centers or hotel front desks as well; that policy recently yielded improvements to Marriott's help desk training, Foster says.

At Sharp, a program called "Walk in My Shoes" embeds IT staffers in business units to observe what goes on during a normal workday. By the end of the year, 30% of the IT staff will have taken part in the program, says Chris Johnson, senior systems analyst at Sharp.

Hands Across the Water

Best Places also extend relationship-building across the globe to international peers through cultural training and global travel. This is becoming important, with the average number of IT employees outside the U.S. increasing from 403 last year to 517 today at Best Places companies.

Such is the case at Kennametal Inc. (No. 96), a $2.3 billion maker of tooling systems, with operations in 60 countries. As the Latrobe, Pa.-based company increases its overseas presence, it encourages IT staffers at all levels to travel abroad and offers cultural training classes. Recently, two help desk staffers traveled to India to train new employees there. "Now, since they know each other so well, everything jells together," says Karen Romanko, manager of the project office and global support center. "It's like they're talking to their neighbor 10 feet away."

But you can't encourage good relationships if you're not willing to set that example at the top levels of the department, says Ralph Niederst, CIO at Kennametal. "You've got to show a sincere appreciation for people's efforts, and the key word is *sincere*," he says. That means knowing things such as employees' hobbies and what their kids are doing. "Half the time, if you know their name, they act surprised," says Niederst, who often takes IT staffers to lunch or even fly fishing or trapshooting.

It helps if the IT leader is extroverted, like the CIO at Sharp, who agreed to sit in the dunk tank at an event for raising IT group awareness. But it's enough to simply be responsive, like Charles Schwab & Co.'s CIO, who personally answers every e-mail sent to him within 24 hours.

Open, nonhierarchical communication is another characteristic of Best Places. "When they get to know you outside of work, they're not afraid to come into your office," Niederst says.

At Columbus, Ga.-based Aflac Inc., which ranks No. 25 on this year's survey, the lines between management and nonmanagement are intentionally blurred, according to Derrick Hensley, a senior applications developer at the $14.3 billion insurer. "Employees feel comfortable promoting their ideas," he says. "We know we can suggest ideas to help us be more efficient."

A Whole Person

Recognizing the human side of IT also includes providing benefits that make it easy to have a life outside of work. In the survey of Best Places employees, two benefits rated "extremely important" by respondents were flexible hours (41%) and telecommuting (36%), which were outstripped only by profit sharing, health insurance and paid vacation.

But that means listening to what IT employees really value in terms of work/life balance and then taking action. When a MasterCard survey revealed a strong desire among many employees for a fitness facility in the St. Louis office, for instance, the company built one. And when Allstate workers wanted to put a ping-pong table into a conference room, they were given the go-ahead.

Then there's providing support to employees who are going through difficult life changes. Marriott, for instance, has a program through which employees can offer a day or two of their own time off to co-workers who are in need of extra personal leave time. And like many of the Best Places, Allstate allows flexible work schedules, in addition to providing tools and technology to support remote work. In fact, when the spouse of the company's lead security architect was transferred to Maine recently, Allstate helped relocate the architect's position to that state, Sitkiewicz says.

Understanding that IT staffers need to continually update their skills and yet may be stretched for time, Best Places also create ample opportunities for advancing skills through e-learning programs that can be done at work or home or by reimbursing the cost of formal education. At Aflac, employees are not only reimbursed for exam fees for approved technical certifications, but they are also given a financial award when they pass the exam.

Allstate has implemented programs to train IT personnel in a variety of soft skills. For instance, IT workers attend weeklong project-management boot camps or engage in team-building exercises in off-site environments such as forest preserves. But that requires an investment, Brune says. "When all the expense conversations come up, it's the first thing people want to cut, but it's the last thing I'd cut out," she says.

Giving Life to Good Ideas

The counterpart to all that investment is reaping what you sow, and that's another thing Best Places are good at: harvesting the good ideas that flow from their employee base. Even better, many of these companies actively encourage new ideas to take shape.

For instance, MasterCard formed a group recently to read and discuss the book *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*, by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. "We wanted them to take the concept of globalization and discuss how that applies to our business," Reeg says.

Northwestern offers financial rewards to employees who implement new ideas, based on the amount of money the idea saves, says David Granger, an IS human resources consultant at the company.

For Marriott, innovation comes down to a common theme, Foster says: Success is never final. For instance, the IT group continually finds ways to change and simplify the experience of hotel guests, he says. The company recently piloted two new check-in/check-out processes involving kiosk and wireless Pocket PC technologies. For internal users, Marriott followed up on a project to centralize financial systems by Web-enabling them, and it's extending access to the system internationally. "We're constantly striving to improve," Foster says.

And that is how IT people like it. "People like to rise to a challenge — especially IT people," Niederst says. "Once you achieve a goal, you're part of a winning team, and then you gain confidence, which breeds more success."

After all, says Glen, "a Best Place to Work is not where you put your feet up and eat Twinkies." Rather, he says, it's where employees are given the opportunity to fully engage with the work they get up in the morning to do. ▸

Brandel is a Computerworld *contributing writer. Contact her at marybrandel@verizon.net.*

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Proven Security

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Members of the Quicken Loans IT team: Bill Parker, Radek Papiez, Sandy Pasharikovski, Frank Laura, Joy Ziraldo and CIO Todd Lunsford.

MICHELLE ANDONIAN

Inside the TOP 5

A typical day at these top-ranked IT departments is full of hustle and hard work, and energized staffers.

No.1

QUICKEN LOANS

By building its own applications, this online mortgage lender gets the systems it wants and IT staffers get their hands on homegrown technology.

BY MARY K. PRATT

WHY THEY'RE TOPS

- **Ranked No. 4 for retention**
- **Ranked No. 3 for benefits**
- **Training budget per IT employee per year: $2,500**
- **32% of its IT managers are women**

TECH WORKERS at Quicken Loans Inc. don't hold back on compliments. Just listen to what some of them have to say about their company: "Great environment and great benefits." "Great culture." "Great leadership." "Great people." "Great place to work."

They aren't simply trying to flatter the boss. They cite specific policies and philosophies that have made the Livonia, Mich.-based company the No. 1 place to work for two years running. Workers say they value their ability to take ownership of ideas and projects. They also like the flexible environment that helps them balance home and work. And they enjoy the collaborative atmosphere.

The events of a recent day clearly demonstrate these points.

Continued on page 36

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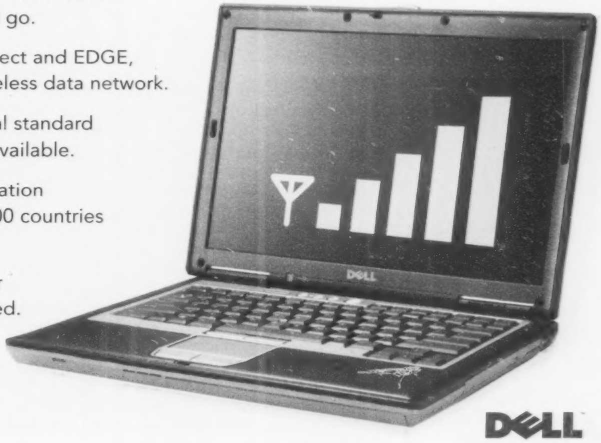

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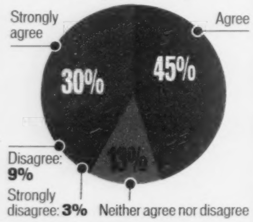
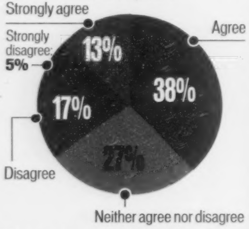
BEST PLACES BY THE NUMBERS

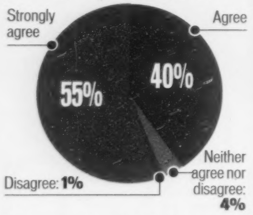
There are opportunities for career growth at my company.



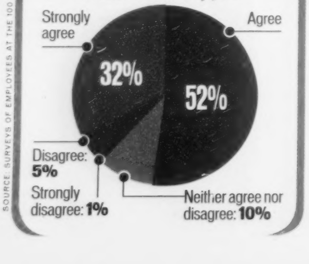
I have a well-defined career path.



I have a good relationship with my co-workers.



I have access to the tools and technologies I need to do my job.



SOURCE: SURVEYS OF EMPLOYEES AT THE 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT FOR 2006

Continued from page 34

8 A.M.: It's Tuesday morning and the start of the workday for many of the company's 320 IT workers. As they arrive on the fourth floor, they come face to face with Quicken Loans' version of The Wall, a long whiteboard where they can respond to weekly questions. This week's topic: What were the fads when you were in high school?

> Everyone is empowered to bring up ideas.
>
> **RADEK PAPIEZ,** CAPTAIN, COMPUTER TELEPHONY INTEGRATION TEAM

To the left of that is The Wall of Acclaim, a collection of written compliments for the company's tech workers. There's also an American flag, a gift from a pilot returning from Iraq whose family received financial support from the Quicken Loans technology team.

"When people come up the stairs or get off the elevator, they see something positive and get fired up," CIO Todd Lunsford says.

9 A.M.: Radek Papiez, captain of the three-person computer telephony integration team, starts working on current projects. He and another team member focus on program modifications meant to enhance the company's ability to track external client communications. Like most applications at Quicken Loans, this one is proprietary.

"Our No. 1 mission is instead of buying the technology, we build it," special projects manager Joy Ziraldo says, adding that this approach allows the company to get exactly what it wants.

As a result, IT staffers make about 20 production changes daily, whereas commercial applications get one or two changes a year, Lunsford says. Although the tasks can vary dramatically from one day to the next, changes could range from simple Web site updates and spelling corrections to complex database and system upgrades.

Such internal statistics aren't surprising, considering that Quicken Loans' data center has 450 servers and the IT department supports about 200 different business applications.

Meanwhile, Lunsford, Director of Engineering Frank Laura and Lunsford's other direct reports get together for a biweekly managers' meeting, which generally focuses on major initiatives.

> We have a company culture that's very strong and rich and entrepreneurial. Culturally, people take ownership and have the ability to make an impact.
>
> **TODD LUNSFORD, CIO**

Although Laura has meetings throughout the day, he doesn't need appointments to talk with Lunsford, other managers or anyone else at Quicken Loans. Employees use phone calls, e-mail and instant messaging to stay in touch, although they prefer face-to-face interaction. In fact, the IT department values communication so much that managers gave up their private offices to work alongside their teams.

11 A.M.: Papiez heads off to a 20-minute meeting with Quicken Loans' Web site marketing manager Matt Cardwell, marketing manager Regis Hadiaris and Lunsford. They talk about enhancing the external customer Web site by adding another communications channel.

> Our No. 1 mission is instead of buying the technology, we build it.
>
> **JOY ZIRALDO,** SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER

Although the Web site is owned by the marketing team, Papiez's team developed the idea for the enhancement.

"Everyone is empowered to bring up ideas," says Papiez, who joined Quicken Loans nine years ago, after earning a business degree from the University of Detroit Mercy and playing a year of professional soccer.

NOON: Lunsford eats lunch at a nearby casual restaurant with data capturer/analyst Curtis Houghmaster, who won the lunch in an IT-department-sponsored raffle benefiting an autism foundation.

Meanwhile, Laura eats lunch at his desk as he works on a system that tracks all the projects his staff is tackling. "There are thousands of them in there, literally thousands," Laura says. Today, he's working on a subset of about 200 tasks that are part of a larger Web-related project.

Such work requires close cooperation with the marketing department, and Laura says Quicken Loans' decision to collocate IT and marketing really pays off in this respect. "We've evolved as a team. It not only puts us on the same page, but we hear things about their projects that we would not otherwise hear," Laura says.

12:45 P.M.: Sandy Pasharikovski comes into the office. Pasharikovski, who manages eight business systems analysts, usually works from home on Tuesdays and Thursdays so she can take her 4-year-old daughter to and from preschool.

1 P.M.: Pasharikovski meets with a member of the Rat Pack team, a subset of the Mouse Trap team that goes deep into business units to find opportunities for technology-based business improvements. She and business consultant Jenny Berg talk about what the team can do to help the mortgage bankers streamline their communications with external clients.

"We have a company culture that's very strong and rich and entrepreneurial," Lunsford says. "Culturally, people take ownership and have the ability to make an impact."

6 P.M.: Most of the IT staff heads home. Lunsford says he doesn't expect his employees to work around the clock, something that has helped earn Quicken Loans multiple "great places to work" awards.

Such philosophies also help the IT shop retain workers; Lunsford says the retention rate is around 90%, with many employees having 10 years of service or more. Lunsford himself started at Quicken Loans in 1997 as director of technology and became CIO in August 2000.

Although most workers have left, about 15 stay to attend an informal training session on .Net run by software engineer Chris Risner. This is a nighttime version of regular lunchtime workshops run by the IT department. "I encourage folks on my team to share what they know," Laura says.

1 A.M.: Systems engineer Bill Parker is working an unusual night shift as part of the quarterly maintenance on two of the company's major systems, among other tasks generally done during downtime. He works with developers, network administrators, quality assurance workers, back-end storage teams and the Linux and Windows teams to coordinate the work.

Workers at other companies might dread such overnight stints, but Parker has a different perspective. "I love working under pressure, and I love a challenge," he says. "Everyone's excited and raring to go." ▸

Pratt is a Computerworld *contributing writer in Waltham, Mass. Contact her at marykpratt@verizon.net.*

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COMPUTERWORLD
100
BEST PLACES
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No.2
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

IT workers here are motivated by the students they serve and the relaxed approach of their CIO.

BY JENNIFER McADAMS

University of Miami CIO Lew Temares (center) is flanked by staffers Jackie Zucker (left) and Michael Zucker.

RED MORGAN

WHY THEY'RE TOPS

- **Ranked No. 1 for diversity; 74% of IT staffers are minorities**
- **Ranked No. 3 for training**
- **Ranked No. 3 for career development**
- **Ranked No. 3 for retention**

INVIGORATED BY the natural energy flowing through a campus filled with youth and Florida sunshine, the University of Miami's technical staff is also motivated by a CIO whose philosophy centers on free food, humor and the freedom to explore new technologies.

Less-than-desirable factors also drive this formidable staff, which must brace each summer for a potentially hellacious hurricane season. During last year's major storms — hurricanes Katrina and Wilma — some university IT workers clocked between 36 and 72 hours straight to make sure systems and services persevered.

To combat hurricane anxiety and other challenges, CIO Lew Temares says he uses heavy doses of humor, which he claims is a major contributor in UM's snagging the No. 2 spot on *Computerworld*'s Best Places to Work in IT list for the second year running. "Through all the disasters we've endured, we've yet to have anyone crack up or break down mentally," he quips.

Temares doubles as dean of the College of Engineering, and he insists on keeping UM's technology workers close to the students they serve. A typical day in the life of UM's technical staff reflects those various aspects of Temares' approach.

6:30 A.M.: The day starts early for UM's top IT managers, who compete with students for parking. "We think of our parking permits as 'hunting licenses,' " remarks Director of Applications Development Michael Zucker.

9 A.M.: Meetings are in full swing, and Zucker is again immersed in student life with the IT initiatives on his plate. "Today, I met with the dean of students to discuss 'social computing.' Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook have become very popular and play an important part of our students' daily lives. We discussed the impact of improper usage of these social sites and their implication for students and the university," he recalls.

10 A.M.: Another student-driven issue is on the table for the director of applications, database and Web development, Jackie Zucker (who is married to Michael), who meets with student representatives to discuss their IT needs.

Frequently, technology initiatives that support UM students are hatched in the school's different computing divisions, notes Tim Ramsey, associate vice president for IT.

"For example, we are working on an effort called 'My UM Backup.' For $80 a year, students can back up 2GB of files, which they often type wirelessly around the campus," he explains. The effort is a brainchild of one of Ramsey's direct reports.

11:30 A.M.: IT staffers break for lunch but adamantly refuse to relinquish precious parking spaces. "Eating in the food court with the students and faculty allows you to enjoy the university ambiance," says Michael Zucker.

1 P.M.: Through the rest of the day, it's one meeting after another with vendors, student representatives and UM administrators. Michael Zucker meets with executives from Ariba Inc. to plan a major upgrade of purchasing, procurement and electronic forms software. He grills the vendor on training techniques to bring UM administrators up to speed quickly. Meanwhile, Jackie Zucker is working through IT issues surrounding health insurance changes that will affect graduate students working as teaching assistants.

Still, scheduled meetings don't totally dictate the days of top IT executives at UM. Senior managers make it a point to leave hours open for staffers eager to put forth new ideas and get their hands on the latest technology.

"Our employees may not be rewarded with a bunch of shares in a company, but they are invited to test out new products," says Joe Donahoo, assistant dean of the College of Engineering. "This gives them a special reward in seeing an idea come to fruition." ▸

McAdams is a freelance writer in Vienna, Va. You can contact her at jmtechwriter@aol.com.

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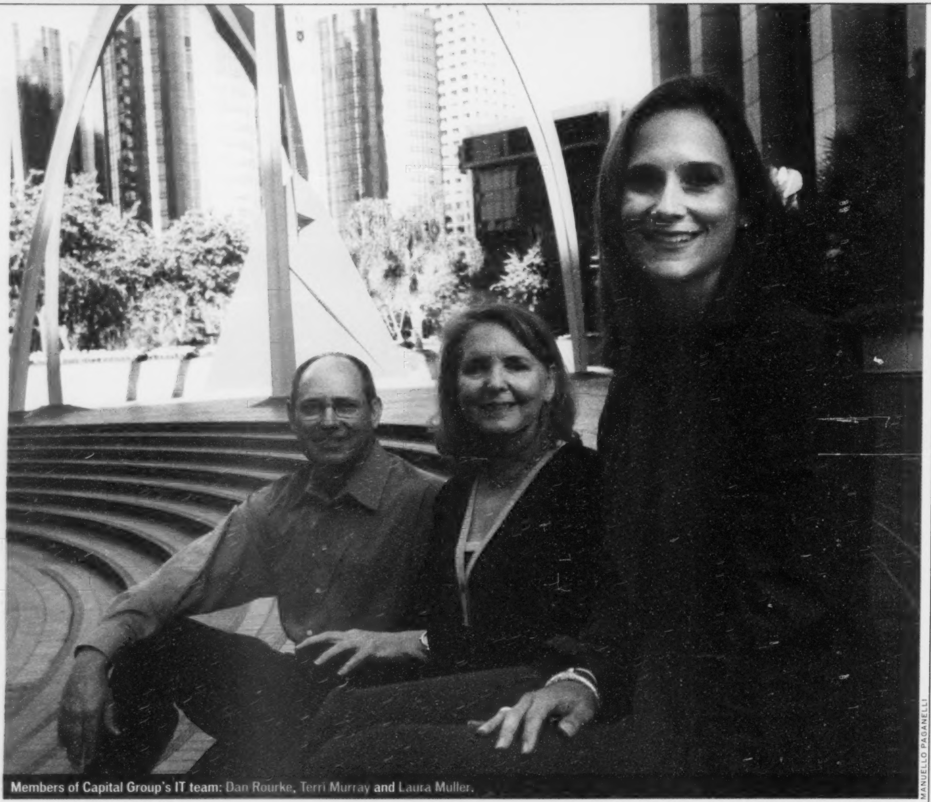


Members of Capital Group's IT team: Dan Rourke, Terri Murray and Laura Muller.

MANUELLO PAGANELLI

No. 3

THE CAPITAL GROUP

It's all about teamwork at this investment management firm, where IT workers are found in every facet of the business.

BY JENNIFER McADAMS

WHY THEY'RE TOPS

- **Ranked No. 4 for diversity**
- **Ranked No. 4 for training**
- **Offer 12 days of training per year for each IT worker**
- **52% of the IT staffers are minorities**

IT'S LATE AFTERNOON, and IT workers are poised on the trading room floor of The Capital Group Cos., ready to assist brokers scrambling to close deals. This scenario highlights the company's determination to keep technology workers energized and tightly aligned with key business units.

Of the many IT staffers working the trading floor, some are junior associates. Top IT executives at this Los Angeles-based investment management company often place newly plucked university recruits alongside seasoned brokers.

Following its philosophy, Capital Group shuns top-down management and grooms technical staffers for a variety of positions throughout the organization and around the world. These and other strategies have landed this newcomer in the coveted third spot on *Computerworld*'s Best Places to Work in IT list.

"We've developed an approach that lets our employees work in collaboration, rather than adhering to rigid hierarchies," says Capital Group President Larry Clemmensen. "This has resulted in strong relationships between IT and our business users." A snapshot of a typical day here backs him up.

6:30 A.M.: IT executives arrive early and jump on conference calls with their counterparts across the Atlantic. "The early-morning hours are for operational, project and strategic meetings that involve Europe," explains Debra Lubeski, director of U.S. investment technology and support.

Infrastructure architecture groups also get in early to brainstorm with European end users on products and services available from the company's scattered technology labs and application offices. Capital Group's labs have spawned tools such as customized BlackBerry devices and laptops outfitted to meet coverage and application needs unique to Europe.

"We spend a lot of time on mobile devices," says Dan Rourke, senior IT manager responsible for Capital Group's technology infrastructure.

8:30 A.M.: Throughout the morning, it's "meetings, meetings, meetings" for Vicki Lederman, an IT group vice president. "We interact with business users, with peers and others in IT," she says.

These meetings take place up and down the ranks. For instance, the six officials charged with Capital Group's major IT divisions gather regularly with Clemmensen to tighten bonds between technical projects and business operations. "I have daily conversations with this group of six," he notes.

11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.: Now that the business day in Europe is over, IT managers set their sights inward. "Midday is usually focused on the U.S. team and one-on-one meetings," says Lubeski.

Face time with newer employees is crucial to Rourke. "I like to spend time talking to the associates to try to figure out what they want to do and assess their skills and match them up the best I can with different business units," he says.

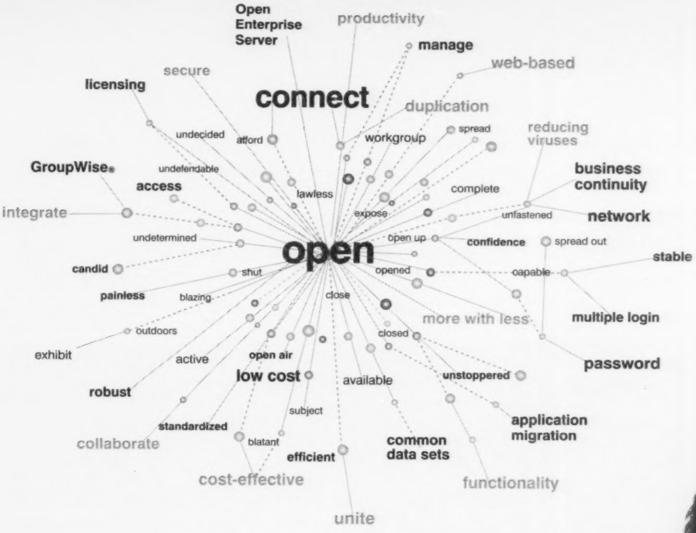
2 P.M. TO 5 P.M.: For many, the day will close with conference calls to executives in Asia. "For instance, we've had to go over different solutions to get around the fact that BlackBerries simply don't work in Japan," explains Terri Murray, IT manager responsible for global support for the company's investment sites. "It's a challenge, because we try to standardize across the enterprise."

Yet it's far from death-by-meeting for Capital Group employees, who regularly take time out to have some fun together.

"I'm in San Antonio, Texas, and today is Fiesta," says Rourke of a day in late April when the city recognizes heroes from the Alamo and the 1836 Battle of San Jacinto.

"We're having a hat parade. Members from each of our teams here have made hats for the managers," he says. "We foster an environment that is fun, friendly and productive." ◆

McAdams is a freelance writer in Vienna, Va. Contact her at jmtechwriter@aol.com.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No.4

AMERICAN FIDELITY ASSURANCE

This Midwest insurance company cultivates the professional development of its IT staffers while fostering a family-friendly atmosphere.

BY MONICA SAMBATARO

WHY THEY'RE TOPS

- **Ranked No. 4 for career development**
- **Ranked No. 8 for retention**
- **IT employee turnover in 2005 was 3.8%**
- **28% of IT employees earned promotions in 2005**

Members of American Fidelity's IT team: Gerald Crabbe, Gina Herndon and Jim Lupton.

AMERICAN FIDELITY ASSURANCE CO.

AT AMERICAN Fidelity Assurance Co., IT staffers enjoy the usual benefits, such as bonuses and profit sharing. But what sets this Oklahoma City-based insurance company's IT group apart from others, say employees, is its open-door culture, clear expectations and an environment that promotes learning and professional growth. A snapshot of a typical day also demonstrates the family-friendly atmosphere at this top IT department.

7 A.M.: Jim Lupton, director of systems management, starts his day the way many IT professionals do: He checks his messages to see if any problems came up overnight and reviews his to-do list. He comes in early, but other IT employees arrive according to the schedule they see fit for their job functions. That's important to Gina Herndon, a systems analyst, who has two children to get off to school. "If I need to go to a school program, that's very welcomed and encouraged," says Herndon, who has been with American Fidelity for 21 years.

Today, things are quiet. So for Lupton, it's a green light on a project meeting at 9 a.m. and a disaster test review after that. And it's looking like he'll get his workout in this morning at the company's "House of Pain," an on-site gym employees can use at any time during the day.

As always, Lupton's door is open as other IT employees file into work. This morning, a staffer stops by to thank him for being a reference in that family's child adoption process and to discuss a recent fundraising event the employee participated in. "We talk about what's going on in our lives," Lupton says. "There's a real family mentality."

10 A.M.: Gerald Crabbe arrives to start his shift on the company's support hotline. For Crabbe, a field automation support specialist, job security and a clear path for career growth are key. "The last place I worked at, they were limited in movement up," he says. Crabbe would like to move into a programmer's position and says the company's training programs and tuition reimbursement plan will help him do that.

"The opportunities are endless," agrees Herndon, "and training is just exceptional."

1 P.M.: Central to the department's activities this afternoon is the "big board," which lays out timelines for all ongoing IT projects and who is responsible for what. If a task isn't completed on time, everyone in the department knows it needs to be done, and the person responsible for completing that task can see if he's holding up someone else's work. "Employees know where they stand at all times," Lupton says.

This project methodology sets clear expectations and promotes a sense of ownership — not only for IT people, but for users in the business units as well, Lupton says. Users hold a stake in all IT initiatives, he explains, and they take an active part in all phases of projects, from design to execution.

And that partnership extends to get-togethers to celebrate the completion of a project or to just blow off steam. For example, the IT department recently joined other company employees in the parking lot for a sand-castle-building party.

5 P.M.: Lupton has finished up with the afternoon's meetings and will likely plow through some e-mails later tonight at home. And while Crabbe finishes the last leg of his shift, which ends at 7 p.m., Herndon packs up for the day. If a new project is under way, she may bring her laptop home to work on it. "But it's never high pressure," Herndon says. "Sometimes you're just fired up." ▸

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GEORGE TUFT

Members of the Grant Thornton IT team: Noi Narisak, Craig Cohen, CIO David Holyoak, Stephani Osborne (holding a rose to signify what the company calls its "passion for the business of accounting") and Melissa Hunt (on videoconference from Dallas).

No. 5

GRANT THORNTON LLP

For IT staffers at this accounting firm, developing their business skills and keeping systems humming are all in a day's work.

BY EUGENE A. DEMAÎTRE

WHY THEY'RE TOPS

- **Ranked No. 9 for retention**
- **Spends $2,318 per year per IT worker on training**
- **43% of its IT managers are women**
- **29% of its IT staffers are women**

AT GRANT THORNTON LLP, the "Grant Thornton experience," as employees call it, is how the Chicago-based accounting firm is providing career development for its staff and maintaining its integrity and technology during a period of rapid expansion.

David Holyoak, partner and CIO, started out as a CPA more than 20 years ago on the business side of the firm. He notes that "over the past five years, we've grown significantly, from 2,700 to more than 5,000 people total. With growth comes complexity and change. How do we keep pace [with] or, better put, stay ahead of that growth from a million-dollar to a billion-dollar organization? We intend to support our internal customers with the best technology available." A snapshot of a

Continued on page 46

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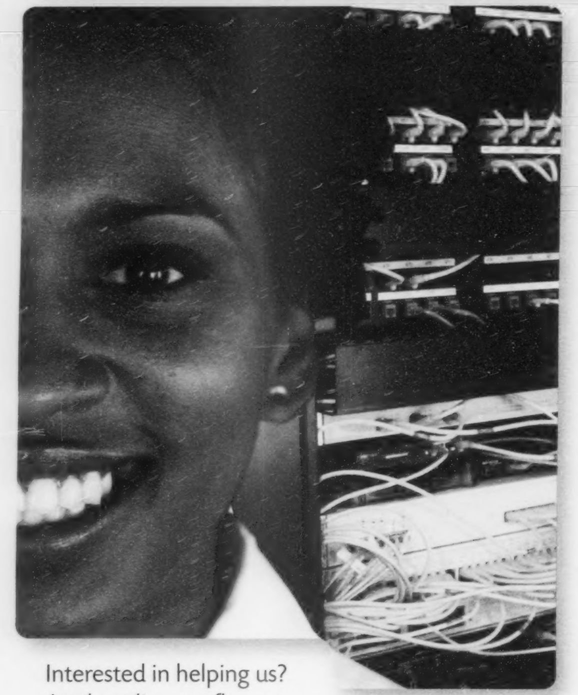

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> “I think the Oak Brook data center feels almost like a club – we're truly a close team. We [also] have some of the best cutting-edge technology right here in our data center.
>
> **CRAIG COHEN**, NETWORK ENGINEER

Continued from page 44

typical day at Grant Thornton shows how that's done.

6 A.M. TO 8 A.M.: Network engineer Craig Cohen is on call three days a week. “I'm going through the transition from being a remote-access engineer to learning the essentials of a network engineer,” he says. “After my manager feels that I have the appropriate training, I'll be on call all the time.”

8:30 A.M.: Melissa Hunt, regional technology manager at Grant Thornton's Dallas office, logs into instant messaging and e-mail. She has already checked them from home with her BlackBerry. “I'm responsible for relationships with regional managing partners, the office managing partners and the IT support staff in the field in my region,” she says. “I'm also involved with the national work/life balance task force. I get to be involved in the business side as well, to learn about the business and take that back to IT.”

9 A.M.: “Typically, I have a couple of hot issues,” says Cohen. “Packing up a router or shipping it out or making a change to an interface. I may have to call people back or respond to e-mail — dealing with ‘little fires.’ ”

Osborne, manager of IT communications and training, meets with the strategic learning group regarding plans for a formal 360-degree review program. After that, she meets with one of Grant Thornton's relationship managers. “Their role is to be the liaison with internal customers, to listen to what customers need and help the back-office staff understand what those needs are,” Osborne says.

10:30 A.M.: Aenoi Narisak, a Web programmer in Grant Thornton's application development and programming unit, attends a two-hour class in Finance 101. “It's very helpful to someone like myself, who's oriented toward IT,” he says. “Such classes count toward our goal of 40 hours of training per year.”

10:45 A.M.: The IT infrastructure support staff installs Visio on Osborne's computer. “The staff is fabulous,” she says. A few years ago, Grant Thornton had a program designed to recognize and reward employees for outstanding customer service, “but it became an ineffective measurement because people were doing so well,” she says.

NOON: As part of the IT department's open-door policy, Holyoak has “skip-level” lunches with his staffers about once a month. “Upper management gives us the opportunity to have a conversation with them about what problems we have and what we're doing well,” Narisak says.

“We have monthly socials, and every two years there's a three-day conference for all IT employees in Chicago,” Hunt says. “The CEO attended the last conference, in November, and I actually got to meet him. As a team, we decided to wear T-shirts with techie sayings. Our teammates voted on which best matched our personalities. On Saturday we wore our shirts, and everyone had a good laugh.”

2 P.M.: Cohen views frequent interruptions positively. “The more people trust me to check something, as opposed to my manager, that's a big compliment,” he says. “I think the Oak Brook data center feels almost like a club — we're truly a close team. We [also] have some of the best cutting-edge technology right here in our data center.”

Osborne spends the rest of the day in software demos for project management methodology software. “The fact that I was included in the panel, despite my nontechnical background, means a lot,” she says. “I got to bring a different perspective, and I learned a lot about project management.”

Meanwhile, Cohen says, “I'm involved in projects such as evaluating new technology, assisting in rollouts or creating various mediums, such as a Web site for communication or instruction documents. I'm also creating a lab for internships.”

6 P.M. TO 8 P.M.: For Cohen, self-improvement continues after he gets home. “I try to pick up some sort of journal to keep my skills up, with IT as well as organizational skills,” he says. “I'm in a Cisco class this week. I have over 70 hours of training this year. Grant Thornton offers lots of recognition and opportunities.” ▸

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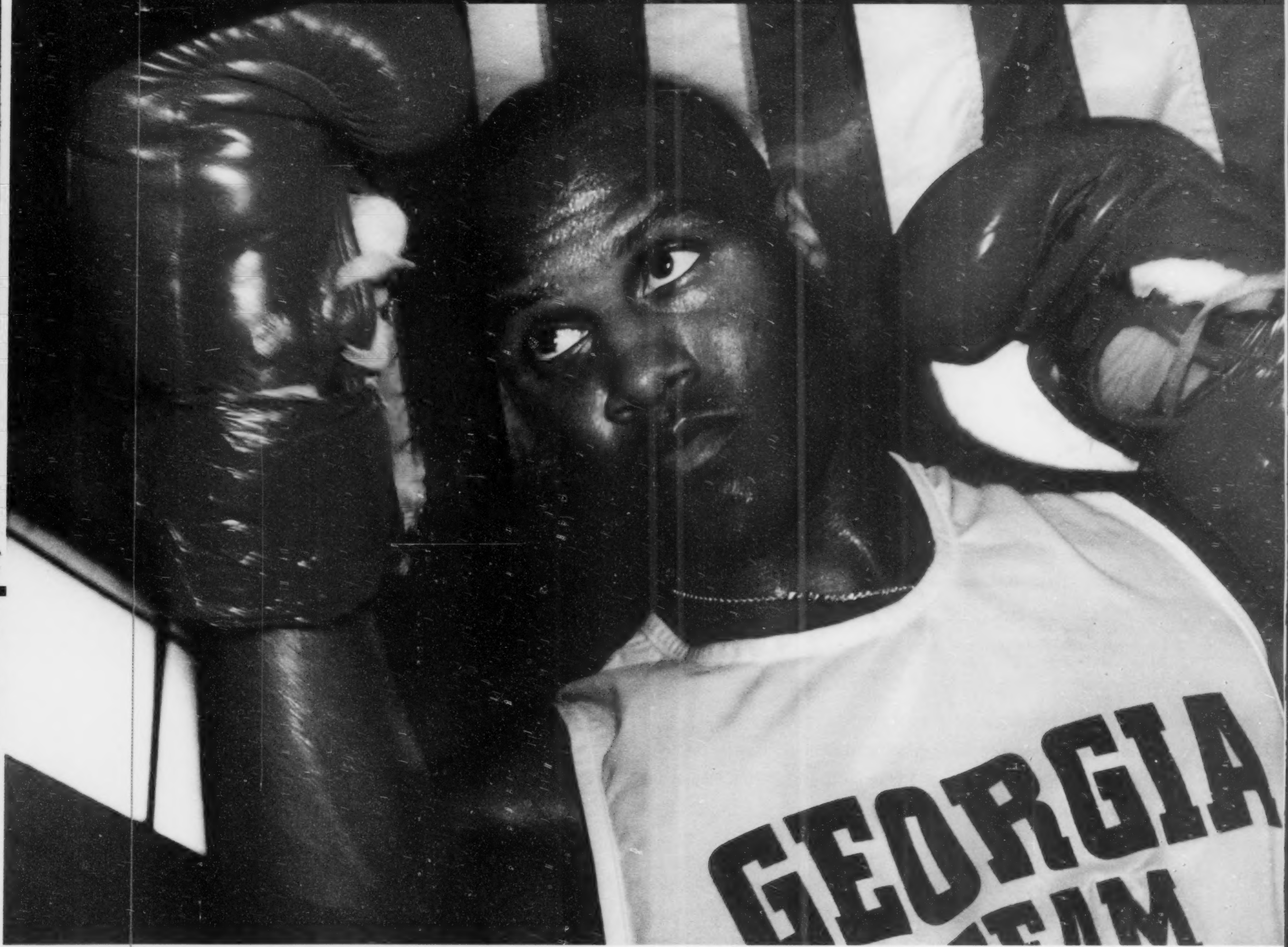

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Interactive chart. [illegible]

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How They Were Chosen

FOR THE 13TH YEAR IN A ROW, *Computerworld* conducted a survey to identify the 100 Best Places to Work for IT professionals.

Last August, *Computerworld* started accepting nominations from companies with a headquarters in the U.S. To qualify to complete the survey, participating companies, both public and private, had to have 2005 revenue of $250 million or greater and employ a minimum of 500 total employees and a minimum of 75 IT employees in the U.S.

Participants submitting nominations were asked to provide the name and contact information of an appropriate individual at their company who was familiar with or had access to employment statistics and financial data, as well as information about benefits policies and programs for the IT department and the company as a whole.

In January 2006, contacts at the nominated companies received a 100-question survey asking about their organizations' average salary and bonus increases, the percentage of IT employees receiving promotions, IT staff turnover rates, training and development opportunities, and the percentage of women and minorities in IT staff and management positions. In addition, information was collected on how the organizations reward outstanding performance, how their retention programs are structured and what benefits they offer, from elder and child care to flextime and tuition reimbursement for college and technology certification courses.

All participating companies were required to obtain feedback from their employees. Upon completion of the company survey, company representatives were e-mailed instructions on selecting a random sample of their U.S.-based full- and part-time IT staffs to fill out an employee survey. The responses to the survey went directly to a third-party research firm.

Topics covered in the employee survey included satisfaction with training and development programs, base salary, bonuses, health benefits and work/life balance. In addition, employees were asked to rate morale in their IT departments and the importance of various benefits; they were also asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with a variety of statements related to subjects such as career growth and management's fair and equal treatment of employees.

A total of 27,108 IT professionals responded to the employee survey from the final 100 companies selected.

The nomination survey, company survey and employee survey were all conducted via the Internet. The company and employee survey portions of the research were closed in March 2006. In scoring the responses from the company and employee surveys, company results were weighted based on importance ratings from the employee component. Approximately one-half of the total scoring system is based on employee responses, with the remainder based on the survey about the company's benefits and other programs.

This year's survey process was managed by Michele Peoples of IDG Research. ◆

– MARI KEEFE AND ELLEN FANNING,
BEST PLACES PROGRAM COORDINATORS

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
1	Quicken Loans Inc. **Livonia, Mich.** www.quickenloans.com	3,345	277	8.1%	8.9%	5	**>> This online lender offers its IT workers personal development training and a leadership training program.** IT workers can receive a year-end performance-based bonus of up to 25% of their salary; spot bonuses can be as high as $10,000. Job referrals net employees up to $2,000. Free cappuccinos and popcorn are available anytime, and free tickets to concerts and sporting events are given out every Thursday. Employees' children can receive $4,000 a year toward tuition and expenses at a college or vocational school.
2	University of Miami **Coral Gables, Fla.** www.miami.edu	9,871	289	6%	11.9%	8	**>> This university, located just south of Miami, provides full-tuition remission for employees and their dependents.** Innovative IT workers are rewarded with promotions, expansion of responsibilities, merit-based salary increases and public recognition for their successes. Employees get 50% discounted tickets to all athletic events, free entrance to an on-campus art museum, discounted access to a wellness center, discounts at the bookstore, and discounted or free tickets to cultural events.
3	The Capital Group Cos. **Los Angeles** www.capgroup.com	6,331	1,180	6.5%	8%	12	**>> This global investment management firm creates individual development plans for IT workers to identify areas of concentration and specific activities to gain new skills.** The average length of service for IT workers is eight years. Employees receive 18 days' vacation in the first year, 20 days in the third year, 23 days in the 10th year and 28 days in the 20th year, with an extra five days of bonus vacation every five years. The company also provides commuter assistance of up to $200 a month in many locations. Full-time IT workers can request a community service leave of absence.
4	American Fidelity Assurance Co. **Oklahoma City** www.afadvantage.com	1,443	132	3.8%	28%	6	**>> This provider of voluntary supplemental life and health insurance serves approximately 1.5 million customers nationwide.** A third-generation family-owned company, it offers some IT staff a flexible schedule to help balance work and family life. An "all-colleague" bonus program was instituted about 10 years ago as a way of thanking employees for helping the company achieve stated financial goals. A "financial scorecard" is published monthly as a way to measure progress throughout the year.
5	Grant Thornton LLP **Chicago** www.grantthornton.com	4,734	128	7.6%	3.6%	5	**>> This firm's parent company, Grant Thornton international, was founded by Alexander R. Grant in 1924 and is now one of the world's largest accounting firms.** The U.S. subsidiary has approximately 50 offices and offers tax services and business valuations, as well as assistance with Sarbanes-Oxley Act compliance and mergers and acquisitions. A centralized IT services model creates a multitiered support structure within the IT department. IT staffers can choose the project teams and special assignments they want to work on.
6	SAS Institute Inc. **Cary, N.C.** www.sas.com	5,329	283	1.8%	19.7%	5	**>> Incorporated in 1976, SAS is the world's largest privately held software company.** Ninety-nine percent of employees have their own offices and can select the chair, keyboard, mouse and office arrangements that fit them personally. Employees are allowed to set their own hours based on their needs. An on-site health care center at headquarters provides free services to employees and their covered dependents. The company provides two on-site Montessori child care facilities. SAS's 52,000-square-foot gym includes a 17,000-square-foot natatorium with a 10-lane pool.
7	Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. **Miami** www.royalcaribbean.com	4,028	356	11%	6.7%	7	**>> The company has two cruise brands – Celebrity Cruises and Royal Caribbean International – which carry about 3.5 million passengers a year, making it the world's second-largest cruise line.** IT staffers are offered off-site formal training and seminars, on-site individual training and group formal training in technologies such as Java and Visual Basic. Employees are offered flexible work arrangements and are encouraged to participate in community events during work hours, including United Way and Salvation Army programs. Employees also coordinate an annual children's bike drive.

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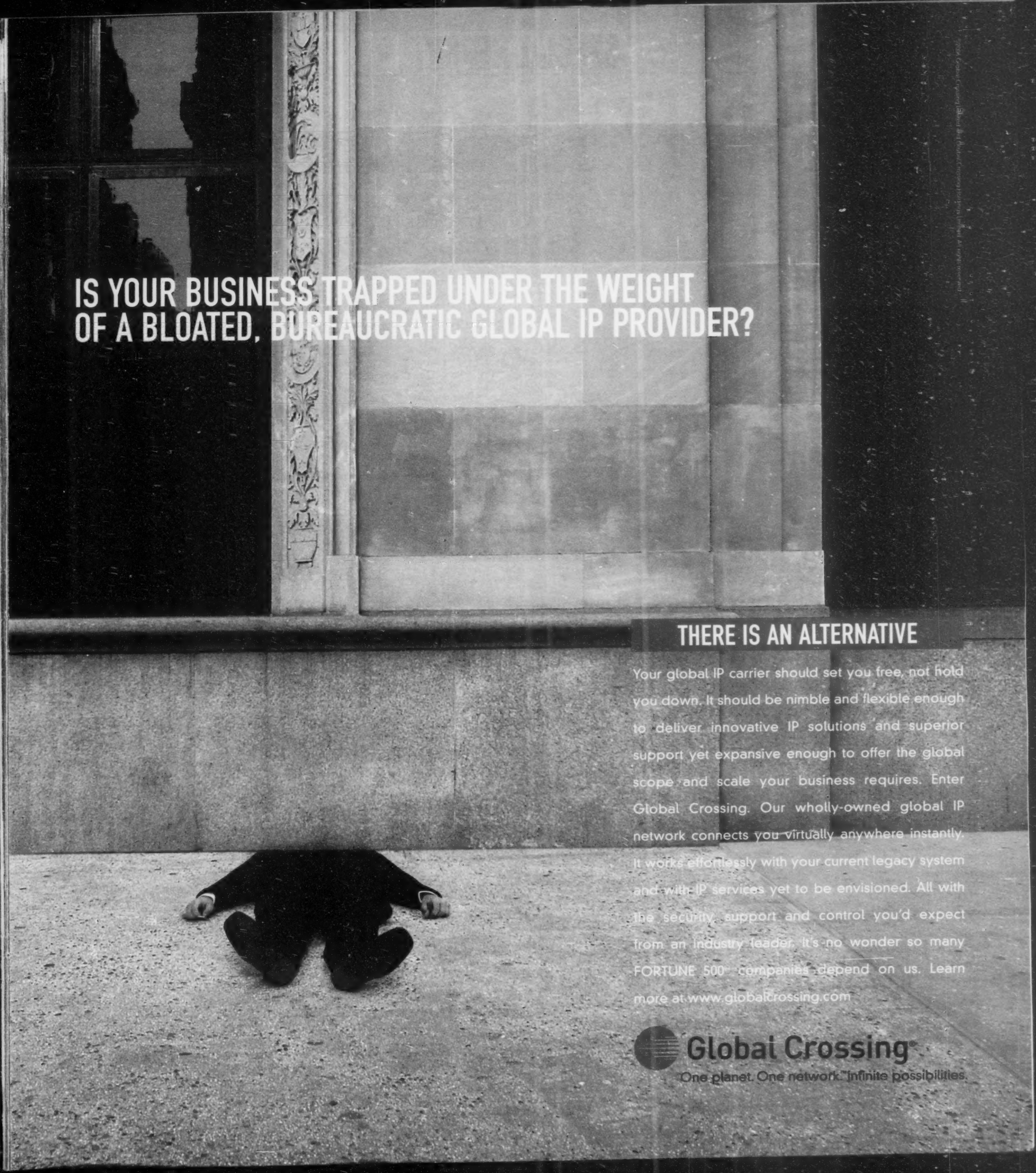

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	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
8	**The Mitre Corp.** **McLean, Va.** www.mitre.org	5,924	298	8%	9.1%	6	**>> This not-for-profit organization provides IT consulting for several government agencies.** With manager approval, IT workers can take advantage of flextime, teleworking, part-time employment or job sharing on an occasional or ongoing basis. A summer-hours program allows employees who have finished their work and work-hour commitments to leave early on Fridays. Employees in the retirement plan can contribute up to the maximum amount allowed by law, and the company contributes up to approximately 11% of their salaries.
9	**University of Pennsylvania** **Philadelphia** www.upenn.edu	17,300	281	3.7%	9%	8	**>> This Ivy League university was founded in 1751 by Benjamin Franklin.** UPenn offers a 403(b) retirement plan in which it fully matches up to 5% of pay, with options for additional after-tax contributions and catch-up savings for employees 50 and older. The university recently added a six-part lunchtime series on career and life strategies for baby boomers. Employees are eligible for free tuition at UPenn upon hire, and after three years their children, spouses and domestic partners are eligible for discounted tuition.
10	**General Mills Inc.** **Minneapolis** www.generalmills.com	17,751	603	5%	22.4%	5	**>> This food manufacturer is known for brands such as Betty Crocker, Pillsbury and Cheerios.** In the past year, the company has expanded its employee-led Women in IS program to include mentoring programs covering topics such as soft skills, gender style differences and working mothers. The IS Diversity Champions program was designed to foster an IT community that understands and values ethnic diversity. This employee-led group is sponsored by a senior IT leader.
11	**Mount Carmel Health System** **Columbus, Ohio** www.mountcarmelhealth.com	9,120	121	2.4%	9%	2	**>> This health care system serves the greater Columbus area and central Ohio, has its own nursing college and trains medical students from Ohio State and Wright State universities.** The organization encourages its staffers to develop their particular areas of strength or expertise, recognizes individual and team accomplishments and offers work/life balance programs.
12	**FedEx Corp.** **Memphis** www.fedex.com	253,625	6,464	4.7%	8%	5	**>> FedEx's FedEx Express unit delivers some 3 million packages each day, and its FedEx Ground unit provides ground delivery of small packages in North America.** Last year, a program was launched to give FedEx IT employees a better-defined career path. The program offers more opportunities for in-band promotions, a comprehensive overview of career opportunities, a new structure that aligns the FedEx IT organization's performance-based culture and compensation program with the external labor market, and performance standards that help managers recruit, develop and advance employees and help employees create individual development plans.
13	**Securian Financial Group Inc.** **St. Paul, Minn.** www.securian.com	2,308	393	2%	15%	9	**>> Formerly known as Minnesota Life, the company offers individual and group life and disability insurance and annuities.** The majority of IT hiring is at the entry level, with the goal of training and promoting IT staffers to senior technical and managerial positions. A job-posting program allows IT workers to move between all types of jobs within the company. Securian provides both technical and managerial training, as well as degree and certification reimbursement. The company also offers on-site child care.
14	**American Century Investments** **Kansas City, Mo.** www.americancentury.com	1,844	314	3.8%	8%	15	**>> Benefits promoting health and well-being at this mutual funds administrator include medical, dental, vision, disability, voluntary long-term care, retiree, basic life and employee assistance programs.** A retirement plan provides tax advantages through pretax contributions and tax-deferred company contributions such as a company match, an annual fixed contribution and a discretionary profit-sharing contribution. An on-site cafeteria offers subsidized meals, and the on-site fitness center is staffed with personal trainers and offers aerobic and yoga classes, nutrition counseling and massage therapy.
15	**Northwestern Mutual** **Milwaukee** www.nmfn.com	4,636	1,027	2.8%	17.1%	2	**>> This insurance and investment firm has 31 employee clubs that offer company-subsidized activities, such as running, skiing, biking, gardening, fishing and bowling.** The company offers a pension plan and a 401(k) contribution plan with a 50% match on the first 6% an employee contributes. A business networking lunch program is offered at no cost to all employees and contract staffers. The IT department has a five-level career path; employees earn promotions by expanding their technology knowledge.
16	**Hilton Hotels Corp.** **Beverly Hills, Calif.** www.hiltonworldwide.com	61,904	553	10%	20.2%	15	**>> Hilton operates hotels and resorts in more than 80 countries under brand names such as Hilton, Hampton Inn, Doubletree and Conrad.** A new IT career plan includes a Jobs Map that better defines positions and titles and helps supervisors and IT staffers plot their careers. Individual plans were also added to address training needs. Hilton is a premier-level sponsor of AIDS Walk L.A. The Team Member Travel Program offers employees discounted room rates and seasonal spa packages at any of the almost 2,400 hotels and resorts that the company owns, manages or franchises in the U.S., Mexico and Canada.
17	**USAA** **San Antonio** www.usaa.com	21,650	2,240	7%	17%	9	**>> This diversified financial services company offers an enhanced health benefits plan that includes free, on-site health risk assessments and a company-provided personal care account that employees can use to pay upfront medical and prescription expenses.** Other perks include an on-site pharmacy, a free personal financial planning program, a dollar-for-dollar match up to 6% of contributions in the 401(k) plan, and a pension plan. The company also offers college tuition and expense reimbursement up to $5,250 annually for full-time employees and $2,625 annually for part-time employees.
18	**Verizon Wireless** **Bedminster, N.J.** www.verizonwireless.com	52,000	2,144	3.4%	11%	12	**>> This wireless service provider has approximately 45.5 million customers nationwide.** IT staffers are offered three career progression tracks: technology, applications and management. The technical track has a systems development ladder and a technology support ladder that offer promotional opportunities all the way to the level of technical director, which is the equivalent of a departmental director. An annual performance appraisal and plan developed for each employee outlines training objectives for the year, including at least seven technical, three nontechnical and two Verizon Wireless product training days.
19	**Marriott International Inc.** **Washington** www.marriott.com	127,064	1,027	8%	6.4%	6	**>> This hotelier has more than 2,700 lodging properties in the U.S. and 65 in other countries and territories.** IT staffers are surveyed annually to ensure job satisfaction. In 2005, Marriott's IT division experienced voluntary turnover of 5.9%; the average tenure of IT staffers is nine years. A "career journey" development approach gives employees a road map of the skills they need for advancement and the opportunity to work on converged teams with business colleagues to develop the skills to move into other functional areas at Marriott.
20	**Philip Morris USA Inc.** **Richmond, Va.** www.philipmorrisusa.com	11,594	447	4%	11.6%	5	**>> The maker of Marlboro cigarettes, the world's top-selling cigarette brand, Philip Morris sells its products in 160 countries.** The IT training department partners with industry leaders to offer training in new technologies. A leadership program originally developed for the management staff is being delivered to the entire IT organization in 2006. IT staffers participate in a deferred profit-sharing program in which the company contributes 15% of an employee's eligible compensation and employees can contribute a maximum of 15% of their eligible compensation as either a before- or after-tax contribution.
21	**Tellabs Inc.** **Naperville, Ill.** www.tellabs.com	3,643	188	15%	11.3%	5	**>> Tellabs develops software for telecommunications service providers in more than 100 countries.** IT uses selective sourcing to handle peak staffing needs and augment projects with people who have specific skills. Consultants are also brought in to fill gaps in knowledge and transfer specific knowledge and skills to permanent staffers. The IT department sponsors activities throughout the year to celebrate project milestones and holidays. An IT employee recognition program helps motivate workers and recognizes top performance within the IT organization. IT staffers work with technologies such as Web reporting, business-to-business and collaboration tools.
22	**Harrah's Entertainment Inc.** **Las Vegas** www.harrahs.com	100,000	840	13%	16%	10	**>> Professional development opportunities for IT workers at the world's largest gaming company are focused on three primary areas: training, rotational assignments and advancements.** IT staff goals are measured and reviewed quarterly and incorporated into the individual manager's annual objectives. In 2005, approximately 18% of IT employees received promotions. The Employee Life Cycle Framework is a program that follows IT workers from the day they are hired, helping them to improve their skills through development and training.

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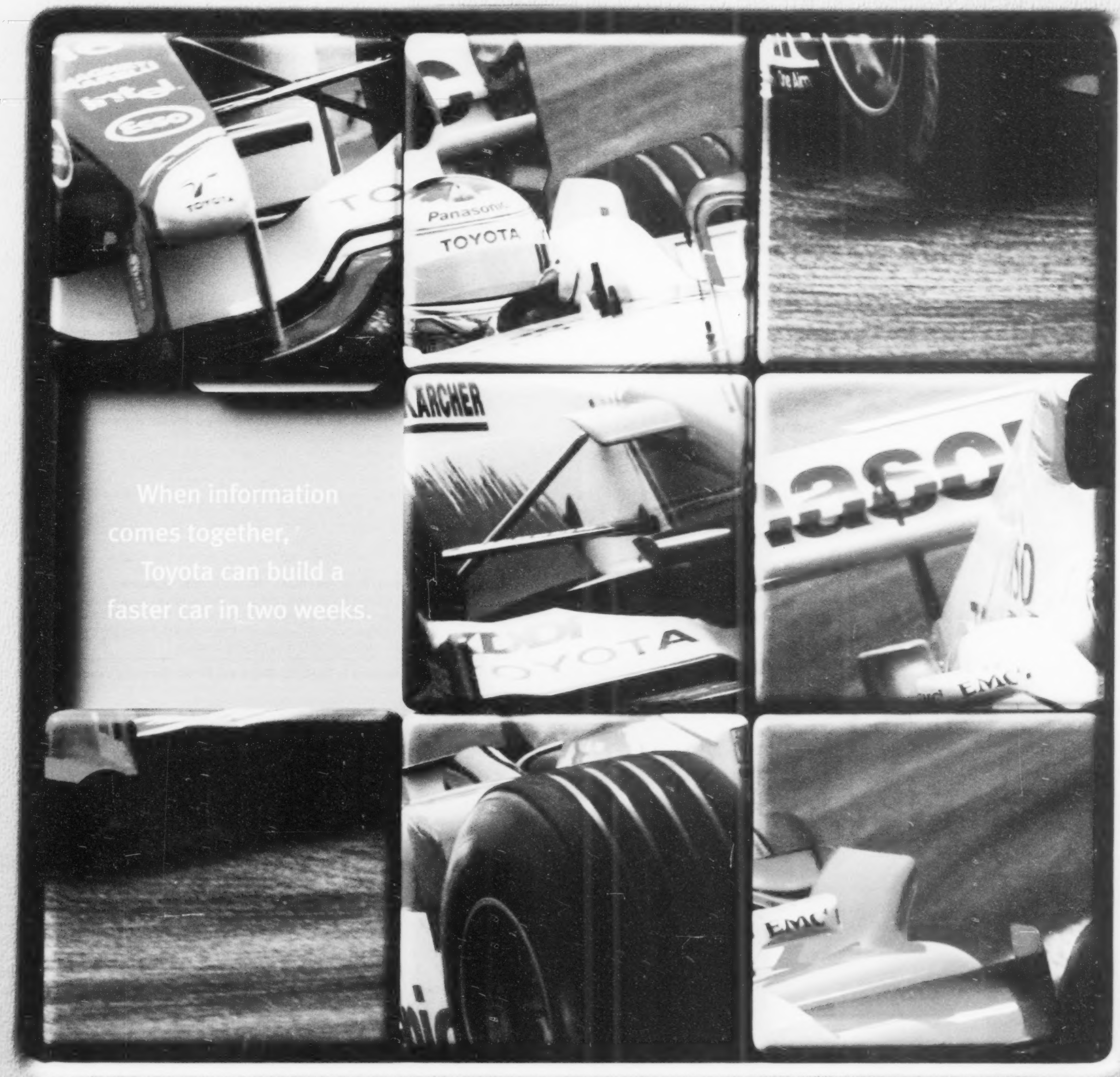

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SPECIAL REPORT

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
23	**Qualcomm Inc.** **San Diego** www.qualcomm.com	9,509	815	6.8%	15.1%	3	**>> This company licenses the CDMA semiconductor technology and system software it pioneered to more than 100 equipment and cell phone makers.** It offers full medical coverage to all employees at no charge. As part of Qualcomm's recognition program, employees can nominate their peers for a "Qualstar" gift certificate that can be used for electronics, home products and other items. Outstanding performance is rewarded with twice-yearly merit increases and bonuses, an employee stock purchase plan and stock options.
24	**Booz Allen Hamilton Inc.** **McLean, Va.** www.boozallen.com	17,303	218	11%	10%	10	**>> This global strategy and technology consulting firm has more than 17,000 employees on six continents and generates annual sales of more than $3 billion.** IT workers are encouraged to help develop the company's three-year IT strategy plan, serve on customer advisory councils and join industry councils and associations. The company forecasts business needs to identify new career opportunities. Three career tracks that have been added recently are security, service operations and account management.
25	**Aflac Inc.** **Columbus, Ga.** www.aflac.com	4,207	506	11.7%	10.1%	4	**>> One of the largest providers of supplemental medical insurance in the U.S., Aflac insures more than 40 million people worldwide.** Each year, on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Aflac gives its workers a profit-sharing bonus equal to a percentage of their annual salaries. In 2005, employees received 5.03% of their annual salaries. Aflac provides a certification reimbursement program for IT workers. Its online e-learning system includes certification tracks that allow employees to prepare for tests at work or at home. More than 1,500 courses were recently added to the e-learning program.
26	**Monsanto Co.** **St. Louis** www.monsanto.com	7,500	450	4.9%	6.4%	8	**>> Monsanto was re-established in 2000 with a sole focus on plant biotechnology.** The IT department's "recognition pyramid" includes these awards programs: the Incredible Talent Award, which recognizes excellent performance over a number of years; the Value Awards, which recognize IT workers and teams that have contributed significant value to the business; the Above & Beyond Awards, which are distributed quarterly; and the Rapid Recognition program, through which anyone in IT can be recognized at any time. The vacation package includes four weeks a year for employees who have been with the company two years or longer, plus an additional week during the winter holidays. Monsanto's St. Louis headquarters features an on-site child care facility and a fitness center.
27	**Hess Corp.** **New York** www.hess.com	10,800	252	4%	11.6%	4	**>> This global energy company explores for, produces and refines crude oil and natural gas. It also markets refined petroleum products, natural gas and electricity.** Within the IT department, all employees have personal career development plans that tie their skills development to business objectives. Employees are also encouraged to attend training and take on stretch assignments whenever possible. Flexible work arrangements are offered, and, depending on location, employees can take every other Friday off.
28	**The Vanguard Group Inc.** **Valley Forge, Pa.** www.vanguard.com	11,308	2,528	3%	7%	6	**>> This investment management firm employs more than 2,600 IT workers, who make up 25% of the entire staff.** In 2005, the internal IT promotion rate was 7.2%, and 93% of IT workers who participated in the job rotation program moved within six months of their request. Training includes specialized learning maps tailored for every IT position, more than 1,800 IT-specific classroom and computer-based courses, and a new suite of online self-assessment exercises to help IT workers identify their strengths and talents. The IT department works with voice-over-IP, RSS, videoconferencing, Web collaboration and portal technologies, as well as other cutting-edge tools.
29	**Principal Financial Group Inc.** **Des Moines** www.principal.com	12,785	1,474	6.9%	9.6%	3	**>> This administrator of employer-sponsored retirement plans offers a formal mentoring program, as well as a work/life balance program.** That program includes time off for most types of planned and unplanned absences, as well as caregiver leave for workers who are having or adopting a baby or providing care to elderly parents or other family members. Flextime is also offered: IT workers can start and end their days earlier or later than a regular schedule, occasionally or regularly. A telecommuting option allows employees to work away from the office for all or a portion of a day or week as part of their regular work schedules.
30	**Universal Health Services Inc.** **King of Prussia, Pa.** www.uhsinc.com	36,000	343	8%	18%	4	**>> One of the largest for-profit hospital operators in the U.S., Universal Health Services owns or operates about 30 acute-care hospitals.** The IT department regularly tests and pilots new technologies, including mobile computing at the bedside and RFID technologies for patient identification and tracking of assets and patients. IT task forces include workers from various disciplines and multiple hospitals. IT managers meet regularly to focus on developing leadership skills for themselves and the staff.
31	**Partners HealthCare System Inc.** **Boston** www.partners.org	4,223	1,069	11.3%	13.1%	6	**>> Partners HealthCare is a nonprofit organization that includes primary care and specialty physicians, community hospitals, two academic medical centers, specialty facilities, community health centers and other health-related entities.** Work/life initiatives include flextime, mothers' rooms and seminars on home buying, parenting and financial planning. A personal priority program allows employees to receive up to a 50% reimbursement for select categories of expenses, including gym memberships, adoptions, computer purchases, financial planning services and postsecondary tuition for dependents.
32	**Raytheon Co.** **Waltham, Mass.** www.raytheon.com	74,193	1,822	10%	13.8%	3	**>> This defense contractor makes the Patriot, Hawk and Tomahawk missile systems, radar systems, and reconnaissance, targeting and navigation technologies.** A leadership development program helps IT workers at each stage of their careers: Early-career employees grow their skills through a two-year series of diverse, rotating assignments. Midcareer workers are offered internal rotational programs, and a fellows program offers technical skills development for those who prefer to grow as individual technical contributors. A self-service learning portal is also available to IT workers who want to further develop their skills.
33	**Chicago Mercantile Exchange Holdings Inc.** **Chicago** www.cme.com	1,313	521	9.4%	24.6%	6	**>> Founded as the Chicago Butter and Egg Board in 1898, the CME became the first publicly traded financial exchange in the U.S. in 2002, with average daily trading volume of 4.2 million contracts.** IT employees are offered in-house training, tuition reimbursement and external certification courses. The IT department also sponsors lunchtime learning sessions and has formed a mentoring program. As part of its innovation program, CME awards cash bonuses and other recognition to those employees who apply for and are issued U.S. patents. Employees receive $1,500 per invention per application and are provided legal and patent-writing funding by CME. In 2005, CME paid more than $63,000 in innovation awards to over 40 employees.
34	**MasterCard International Inc.** **Purchase, N.Y.** www.mastercard.com	2,954	1,789	8.6%	16.2%	9	**>> This credit card company is owned by its 25,000 financial institution members worldwide.** Training within the IT group includes leadership and team development and online business and technical learning classes. Communication outlets include a periodic breakfast chat with the head of IT, quarterly all-employee meetings and monthly face-to-face meetings with speakers from across the company. The benefits package and salaries target the 75th percentile nationally. In-house training and support for certifications, seminars, trade shows and formal education programs are offered. Work/life balance options include reduced work schedules, flexible scheduling and telecommuting.
35	**Cerner Corp.** **Kansas City, Mo.** www.cerner.com	6,252	3,759	14%	31%	14	**>> Cerner sells clinical, financial and administrative information management applications.** Career tracks offer growth and development in both technical and management roles. A career navigation center offers career assessments and coaching, and formal development programs for individual contributors and leaders include structured role-based training and development. An on-site athletic facility features an indoor pool, a cardio room, a gym, a weight-lifting area, racquetball courts and exercise classes. There's also a Montessori facility for employees' children. An on-site primary care clinic offers free care, full laboratory services and an on-site pharmacy.
36	**American Family Insurance Group** **Madison, Wis.** www.amfam.com	8,278	1,045	2.5%	7.9%	8	**>> This mutual insurance company offers employees reimbursement for college tuition, technical certifications and other continuing education programs.** Self-improvement and career-advancement courses are offered on- and off-site. Several hundred online learning courses on IT- and business-related topics, such as Java programming and time management, are available. An incentive program links individual financial bonuses with the company's business goals. IT employees are encouraged to bring forward proposals to test a new technology or idea. If they receive approval, workers are granted work time (up to 200 hours) and funding (up to $10,000) to test their ideas.

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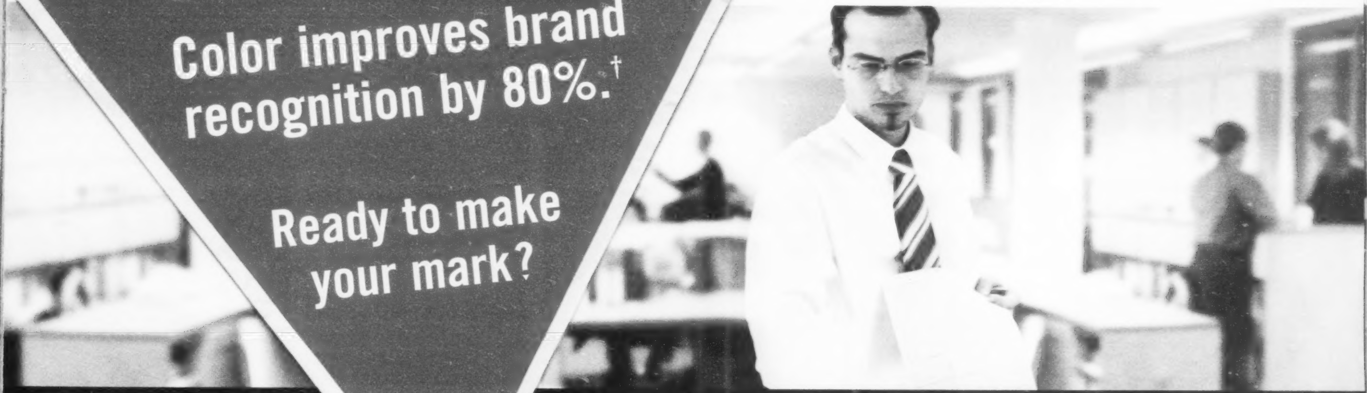

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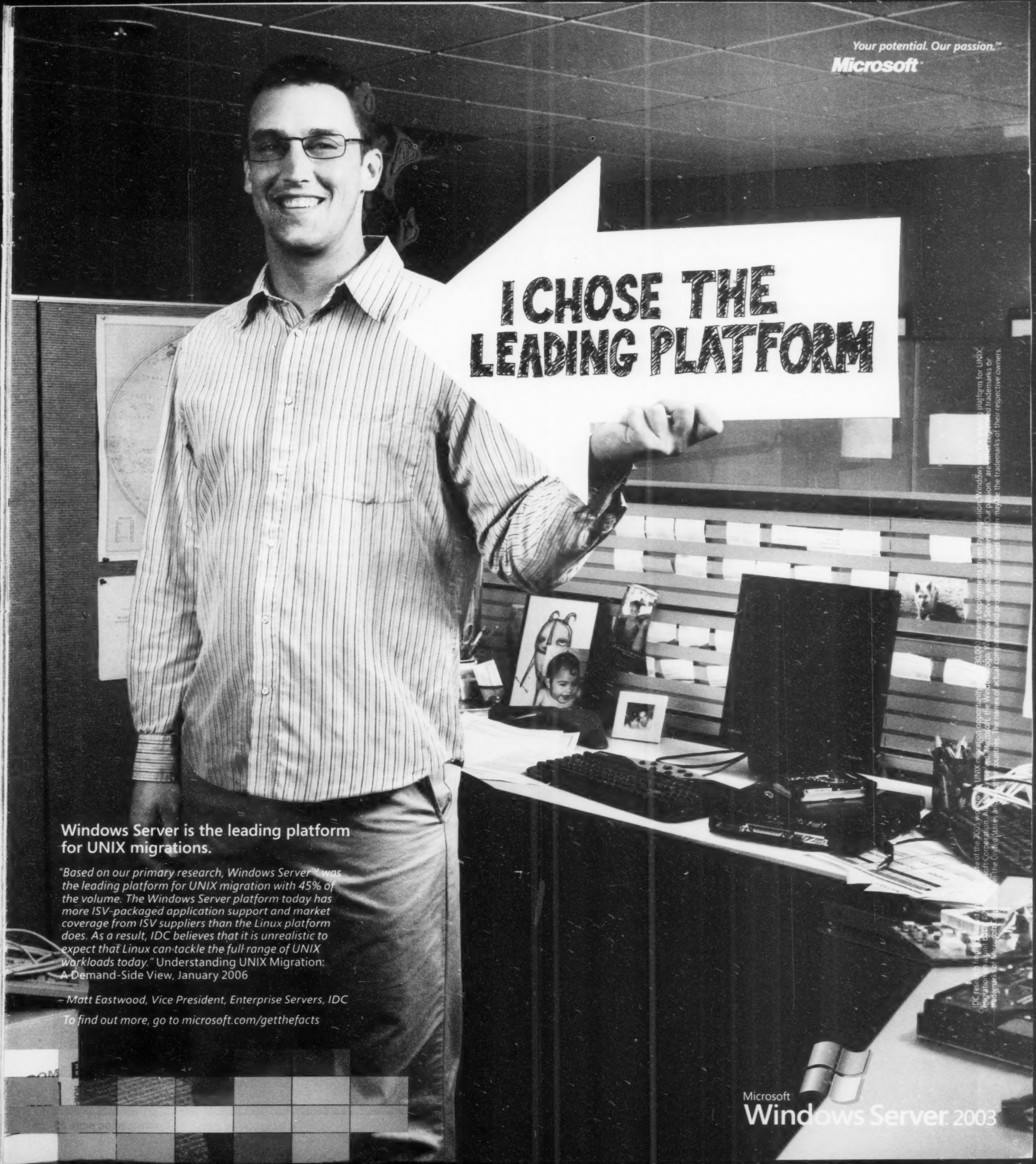
The Tops

The top 10 lists below show the very best of the best – the companies that excel in five areas of employment: diversity, training, career development, retention and benefits. To determine the top 10 lists, we considered the following factors: (1) **Diversity:** Percentage of women and minorities in staff and managerial positions. (2) **Training:** Average number of training days, and average cost of training per IT worker per year. (3) **Career development:** Mentoring programs and tuition reimbursement for college classes and technical certifications. (4) **Retention:** Frequency of employee satisfaction surveys, turnover rate, promotions and corporate communication initiatives. (5) **Benefits:** A range of benefits, including sabbaticals, health vision benefits (percentage paid for by company) and long-term care.

	DIVERSITY	TRAINING	CAREER DEVELOPMENT	RETENTION	BENEFITS
1	University of Miami	National Rural Electric Cooperative Association	Chicago Mercantile Exchange Holdings Inc.	National Rural Electric Cooperative Association	SAS Institute Inc.
2	Miami-Dade County	Saint Luke's Health System Inc.	Cerner Corp.	Calence LLC	Discovery Communications Inc.
3	Fairfax County Government	University of Miami	University of Miami	University of Miami	Quicken Loans Inc.
4	The Capital Group Cos.	The Capital Group Cos.	American Fidelity Assurance Co.	Quicken Loans Inc.	Verizon Wireless
5	Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.	The Mitre Corp.	General Mills Inc.	The Reader's Digest Association Inc.	General Mills Inc.
6	Hilton Hotels Corp.	Verizon Wireless	Hilton Hotels Corp.	SAS Institute Inc.	Philip Morris USA Inc.
7	Southern California Edison	University of Pennsylvania	Philip Morris USA Inc.	Sharp HealthCare	Booz Allen Hamilton Inc.
8	MemorialCare Medical Centers	Ford Motor Co.	Principal Financial Group Inc.	American Fidelity Assurance Co.	National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
9	University of Pennsylvania	Infosys Technologies Ltd.	Publix Super Markets Inc.	Grant Thornton LLP	BAE Systems Information Technology
10	Marriott International Inc.	Hilton Hotels Corp.	Ernst & Young	Standard Pacific Corp.	Sharp HealthCare

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
37	**Ohio Savings Bank** **Cleveland** www.ohiosavings.com	2,561	280	19%	6.2%	6	>> **Founded in 1899, Ohio Savings Bank has more than 50 branches and loan offices.** The IT department participates in early-adopter programs with vendors to give workers access to leading-edge technology. The typical workweek for IT workers is 40 to 50 hours, with flextime and part-time hours available. Salaried employees who work more than 45 hours a week on average receive overtime pay each month. Most IT staffers have the option of working remotely when necessary. The company recently instituted a monetary reward policy for employees with perfect annual attendance. There's an on-site fitness center, and an on-site wellness clinic staffed by a nurse and dietician that offers flu shots, mammograms and other services.
38	**Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.** **East Hanover, N.J.** www.novartis.com	11,722	409	8%	12.5%	10	>> **The U.S. arm of Swiss drug giant Novartis and the maker of Diovan and Ritalin, Novartis Pharmaceuticals has an award program to recognize IT workers who use diversity as a guiding principle in their work.** A diversity action team last year developed a plan for regular communication on diversity themes, including promoting creativity and collaboration, seeking out new perspectives and creating a culture of openness and respect. Project-based bonuses are included in project budgets and are granted to IT staffers for completing major initiatives that significantly benefit the company. Celebratory events are also held for the achievement of project milestones. For delivery of key initiatives and the discovery of new innovations and best practices, employees are eligible for IT business excellence awards.
39	**BNSF Railway Co.** **Fort Worth, Texas** www.bnsf.com	40,218	480	4%	6.3%	10	>> **This freight transportation provider has a network of 32,000 miles of track in the western U.S. and Canada.** Employees, in conjunction with their supervisors, create career development plans that might include formal education through BNSF's tuition reimbursement or MBA programs, training, formal and informal mentoring, and developmental movement, such as promotions within the IT organization and between IT and business groups. A business skills curriculum includes course work in finance, vendor management, business process analysis, effective decision-making and strategic planning. The company offers two formal flexible work arrangements – part-time work and telecommuting – and encourages the use of other flextime arrangements where appropriate. Employees have 11 paid holidays and can earn up to five weeks of vacation a year.
40	**J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc.** **Lowell, Ark.** www.jbhunt.com	16,700	310	8%	18%	10	>> **One of the largest truckload carriers in the U.S., J.B. Hunt has a fleet of tractors, trailers and containers and provides dry-van truckload service throughout the U.S. and in Canada and Mexico.** The company sponsors team-building activities such as "Oktoberfeast," a chili cook-off and a cardboard-boat race. IT employees are encouraged to take part in community charitable activities, including Habitat for Humanity projects. Full tuition reimbursement is offered, as well as continuing training and education opportunities. Other career opportunities include cross-department transfers.
41	**Publix Super Markets Inc.** **Lakeland, Fla.** www.publix.com	136,000	550	9.5%	25%	14	>> **One of the largest privately owned supermarket operators in the U.S., Publix has 875 stores in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee.** An IT-business alignment group provides account management and advice to business units, and an executive group provides governance and support to the IT function. Company executives serve on steering committees for high-priority IT initiatives. More than 40% of IT workers have 10 or more years of service at Publix. The company gives holiday bonuses to eligible workers; salaried workers earn a month's salary as a holiday bonus during a complete calendar year. Workers can also choose to trade in up to a week of bonus pay for additional vacation time.
42	**Sutter Health** **Sacramento** www.sutterhealth.org	42,611	945	7%	10%	5	>> **Organized in 1996 through the merger of Sutter Health and California Healthcare System, this is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit health care systems.** The IT group recently completed an MPLS network upgrade in anticipation of a new electronic health record system to be implemented within the next two years. The company allocates an average of $4,000 per employee per year for training and encourages participation in industry conferences and the pursuit of professional credentials.
43	**Paychex Inc.** **Rochester, N.Y.** www.paychex.com	10,607	664	6.3%	10%	15	>> **This payroll accounting firm processes the payrolls for about 505,000 clients.** A recent IT project increased the efficiency of the human resources department by decreasing manual involvement in the annual enrollment process, creating an electronic feed to track and transmit activity to insurance carriers, and creating Web portals to allow easier self-administration for clients and client employees. The company offers IT staff flexible working arrangements, such as a 9/80 program. All employees are given one paid day off per year for community service. An IT team developed and tested a plan to ensure that Hurricane Katrina victims received their checks accurately and on time. In six weeks, the team processed more than 271,000 disaster-relief checks.

Continued on page 58



Windows Server is the leading platform for UNIX migrations.

"Based on our primary research, Windows Server™ was the leading platform for UNIX migration with 45% of the volume. The Windows Server platform today has more ISV-packaged application support and market coverage from ISV suppliers than the Linux platform does. As a result, IDC believes that it is unrealistic to expect that Linux can tackle the full range of UNIX workloads today." Understanding UNIX Migration: A Demand-Side View, January 2006

– Matt Eastwood, Vice President, Enterprise Servers, IDC

To find out more, go to microsoft.com/getthefacts

Microsoft Windows Server 2003

IDC research findings based [illegible] ate of the 2005 worldwide UNIX migration opportunity [illegible] 30,000 servers deployments driven by migration. Windows [illegible] platform for UNIX migration on a unit basis. © 20[illegible] soft Corporation. All [illegible] reserved. Microsoft, the Windows logo, Windows Server, and "Your potential. Our passion." are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft [illegible] in the United States and/or other countries. The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
44	**Nemours** **Jacksonville, Fla.** www.nemours.org	4,231	224	19%	14%	5	**>> One of the nation's largest children's health systems, Nemours employs more than 400 pediatric physicians, subspecialists and surgeons, and it cared for approximately a quarter of a million children in 2005.** IT staffers work on projects such as a computerized physician order-entry system, pharmaceutical technology, and systems for tracking and monitoring patients. Another initiative involved the expansion of the data warehouse to provide business intelligence tools. Benefits include free health care for all children of eligible employees and custom health and long-term care options. IT employees use remote access and wireless technologies to telecommute from remote locations and structure their responsibilities around their personal lives. IT staffers can also use voice-over-IP technology to answer office phones from home.
45	**Ernst & Young** **Lyndhurst, N.J.** www.ey.com	24,353	1,118	5.5%	10%	3	**>> This U.S. division of Ernst & Young International provides accounting, consulting, tax and legal services from its offices throughout the U.S.** The IT group evaluates and recommends the latest technologies, including global messaging services, reporting applications and remote connectivity services. IT staffers are offered formal training, as well as varied work assignments that provide on-the-job learning. Benefits programs include flexible work arrangements, elder care, backup child care, tuition reimbursement, employee discounts, full technology support, pretax spending accounts for dependent care and uncovered medical expenses, a referral bonus program and a concierge service.
46	**Dade Behring** **Deerfield, Ill.** www.dadebehring.com	3,324	148	6.1%	11.5%	2	**>> The IT group of this diagnostic testing kit maker supports more than 6,000 employees and operations in 34 countries and serves more than 25,000 customers worldwide.** IT competencies spell out the skills, knowledge and abilities IT staffers need to be successful in their jobs. In 2005, 11.5% of U.S.-based IT employees received promotions. U.S.-based IT employees are offered flexible teleworking. The executive team travels to a different site each month to meet with employees and hosts quarterly town hall meetings open to the global IT organization. Employees use online collaboration tools such as QuickPlace, Sametime, instant messaging and the company intranet. Dade Behring's short-term disability benefit, which is available upon hire and funded by the company, provides 100% income replacement for six months.
47	**CDW Corp.** **Vernon Hills, Ill.** www.cdw.com	4,300	209	16%	9%	6	**>> This technology retailer sells more than 100,000 computer products, primarily through catalogs, phone sales and its Web sites.** CDW offers employees on-site subsidized child care, adoption assistance, domestic partner benefits and a confidential employee assistance program. The company also offers an on-site gym and laundry services. Breakfast is provided for employees twice a week, and there's ice cream on Wednesdays in the summer. Remote access is offered to eligible employees so they can work from home. All IT staffers have career development plans that managers review with the CIO. Other benefits include tuition assistance, customized training programs, paid days off for community service and a charitable donation match program. In 2005, CDW and its employees raised more than $600,000 in donations and matching funds for relief organizations.
48	**U.S. Postal Service** **Washington** www.usps.com	706,000	1,214	7.9%	8.9%	15	**>> Each day, the USPS delivers mail to nearly 140 million homes, businesses and post office boxes, serves 7.5 million customers at its retail outlets and delivers an average of five pieces of mail to each address.** The IT department supports more than 325,000 users, 175,000 desktop computers, 650 national applications and 33,000 point-of-sale workstations. It also facilitates 165 million Web site visits each year. Within its offices, the IT group supports more than 175,000 desktop computers and maintains nearly 100% network availability. IT employee performance is tracked and rewarded via a suite of Web-enabled performance-tracking and compensation systems. An employee connectivity program helps them purchase state-of-the-art PC devices from select vendors at reduced rates.
49	**United Parcel Service of America Inc.** **Atlanta** www.ups.com	348,400	4,592	4%	12%	4	**>> All IT projects at this package delivery company are prioritized based on the strength of their business cases, and an IT governance committee oversees day-to-day operations.** In 2005, IT staffers donated nearly $844,000 to the United Way and recorded more than 22,000 volunteer hours locally as part of the company's volunteer program. UPS donated $1.25 million to the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort while setting up a separate relief fund to assist employees who were affected by the storm. Staffers can purchase UPS stock at a 10% discount through payroll deductions. An education assistance program helps workers with personal advancement, self-development and advancement within UPS. A mentoring program that began in 1999 has matched 340 pairs of participants.
50	**Total System Services Inc.** **Columbus, Ga.** www.tsys.com	6,370	2,725	8%	20%	5	**>> A subsidiary of Synovus Financial Corp., this U.S.-based credit card transaction processor serves bank and private-label card issuers in North America, Japan and Europe.** IT staffers are offered in-house and external training opportunities, and tuition assistance allows workers to earn undergraduate or graduate degrees in various IT and business fields. IT employees are encouraged to find their niche – either working face to face with clients or in front of a computer. The company offers profit sharing, money-purchase pension and 401(k) plans. Based on the financial performance of the company, employees can receive up to 21% of annual salary toward those plans.
51	**Vision Service Plan** **Rancho Cordova, Calif.** www.vsp.com	1,900	228	11%	7.5%	4	**>> Communication is a top priority at this eye-care benefits provider, which has 44 million members.** A new "clear requirements policy" for IT work includes formal one-on-one meetings. Lunch gatherings, staff and division-level meetings, surveys and focus groups, weekly communication on the company intranet and a year-round schedule of open forums also keep IT employees informed and connected. Many IT staffers are on the corporate softball or cycling teams. A quarter of participants in the mentoring program are from IT.
52	**Southern California Edison** **Rosemead, Calif.** www.sce.com	14,828	1,123	4%	19%	6	**>> This subsidiary of Edison International provides power delivery across more than 50,000 square miles.** The IT group tracks the skills of staffers through a "role framework" that identifies staff training opportunities, both within IT and on a corporate level, and develops individual development plans that are included with each employee's performance appraisal. IT managers are taught to use the framework for performance appraisals and to coach staffers in their career development. A biannual survey gauges employee satisfaction with their work environment. An executive-sponsored team reviews the findings and develops an action plan.
53	**L.L. Bean Inc.** **Freeport, Maine** www.llbean.com	3,966	213	3%	5%	6	**>> This outdoor apparel and gear maker was founded in 1912 by Leon Leonwood Bean and is now controlled by his descendants.** The company mails more than 200 million catalogs per year and operates half a dozen retail stores and about 15 factory outlets throughout the Northeast. Employee perks include product discounts and a lottery for the use of the wilderness camps owned and maintained by L.L. Bean. All professional and management employees are entitled to up to five paid days to participate in outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, kayaking and cycling.
54	**Discover Financial Services LLC** **Riverwoods, Ill.** www.discoverfinancial.com	13,445	1,337	10%	10%	5	**>> A business segment of Morgan Stanley, this company issues the Discover-brand credit cards, which are used by some 50 million members.** Training opportunities include instructor-led classes, online learning and monthly lunch sessions with in-house subject-matter experts; a formalized mentoring program; motivation, coaching and team development workshops; and on-site technical and management training courses. The average workweek for IT employees is 40 hours, and flexible scheduling and summer hours are offered. A 19,000-square-foot fitness center has full-service strength training, a cardiovascular training area, personal trainers, massages and classes. Outdoor facilities include basketball and volleyball courts and a 1.8-mile running trail.
55	**Thomson West** **Eagan, Minn.** www.west.thomson.com	10,214	1,548	6.9%	6.3%	12	**>> This subsidiary of The Thomson Corp. provides online information and research services to the U.S. legal market.** One high-profile IT project involved migrating from a mainframe environment to an XML-based, distributed environment with thousands of blade servers. The IT group also recently completed a multimillion-dollar expansion of the company's data centers, tripling capacity. Employees can purchase Thomson stock at discounted rates and receive discounts on child care, health club memberships, computers and books. The company also offers tuition reimbursement and a scholarship program for employees' children. In 2005, IT employees received $390,027 in reimbursements.

Continued on page 60

Top Fives

Flexible schedules and formal feedback: For the second year in a row, **flexible work hours** and **work/life balance programs** finished third and fourth, respectively, among the top retention methods used by Best Places companies. **Competitive salaries** and **benefits** consistently top that list. Feedback goes both ways for nearly half of Best Places companies: 44% of IT employees **formally evaluate their managers** each year. And a majority of companies (63%) report grooming the next generation of IT with **formal mentoring programs**.

INDUSTRIES		
1	Finance	12%
2	Insurance and real estate	11%
3	Health services	8%
4	Education	5%
5	Transportation and logistics	5%

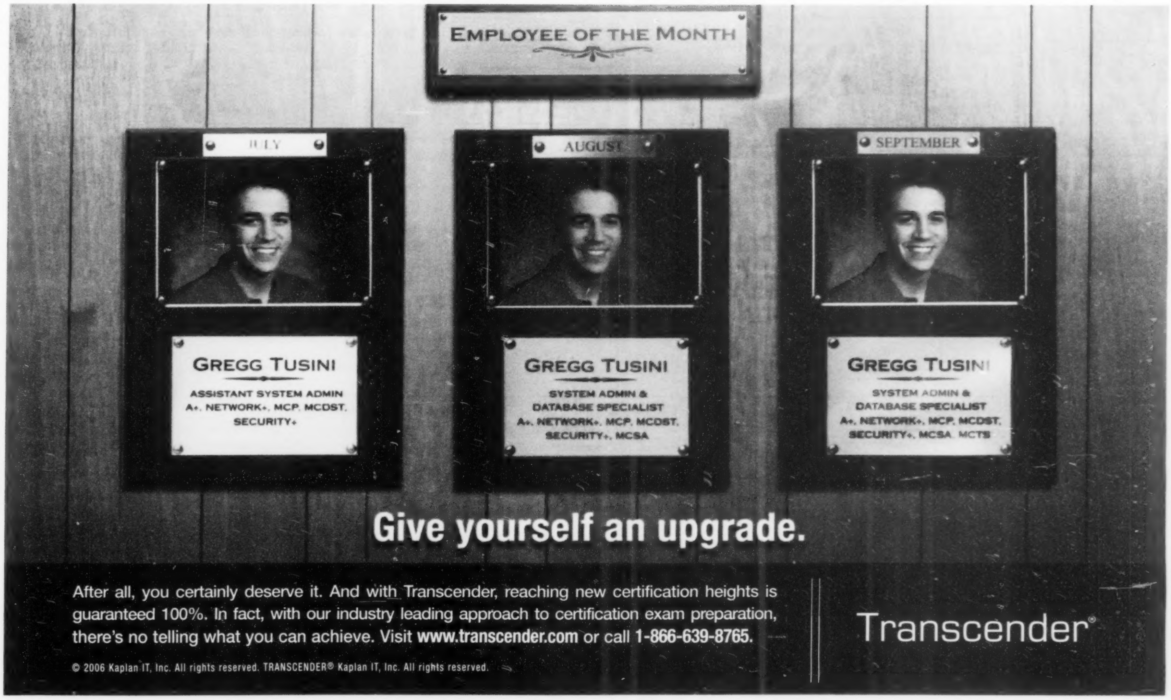
MOST-OFFERED BENEFITS		
1	Paid vacation	100%
2	Health insurance	100%
3	Flexible hours	99%
4	Employee assistance programs	96%
5	Pretax programs for medical expenses not covered	96%

LEAST-OFFERED BENEFITS		
1	Paid sabbaticals	10%
2	Backup child care	26%
3	Company-subsidized child care	27%
4	On-site concierge	28%
5	Paternity leave (beyond what's required by the Family Leave Act)	30%

RETENTION METHODS	
1	Competitive salaries
2	Competitive benefits
3	Flexible work hours
4	Work/life balance programs, such as telecommuting
5	Tuition reimbursement

SPONSORED ACTIVITIES	
1	Company gatherings (company picnics, holiday parties)
2	Open forums with company management
3	Personal/wellness development opportunities
4	Community service support
5	Community/team building

WHERE ARE THE 100 BEST PLACES?	Middle Atlantic	Mountain	New England	North Central	South Central	Pacific	South Atlantic
	19	2	5	33	8	11	22


EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
JULY
GREGG TUSINI
ASSISTANT SYSTEM ADMIN
A+, NETWORK+, MCP, MCDST, SECURITY+
AUGUST
GREGG TUSINI
SYSTEM ADMIN & DATABASE SPECIALIST
A+, NETWORK+, MCP, MCDST, SECURITY+, MCSA
SEPTEMBER
GREGG TUSINI
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A+, NETWORK+, MCP, MCDST, SECURITY+, MCSA, MCTS
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SPECIAL REPORT

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
56	**Northern Trust Corp.** **Chicago** www.northerntrust.com	9,076	981	5%	13%	5	**>> This multibank holding company has offices in 18 states and 11 countries.** Northern Trust has a centrally managed technology group, which enhances opportunities for education, career growth and idea exchange, yet individual IT employees are aligned with business units to connect with clients and products. Work/life balance programs include alternative work schedules, remote working options and career tracks for part-time employees. Some flextime options include four 10-hour days, or nine-hour days with an extra day off every other week. Some IT personnel, including managers, work from home a few days per month or even per week, and a few work remotely full time.
57	**KPMG LLP** **New York** www.us.kpmg.com	20,212	900	12.4%	9.6%	5	**>> The "summer jump-start" program at this U.S. member firm of KPMG International, one of accounting's Big Four, allows all employees to leave at 3 p.m. on Fridays during the summer months.** More than 1,600 training courses are offered to IT staffers. There's also a formal mentoring program, which enrolls 100 IT employees. A new shared-leave program gives IT workers the ability to transfer vacation time that they might otherwise lose to other staffers during emergency situations and bereavement. Over the past two years, KPMG employees have donated more than 12,000 hours to the program.
58	**Edward D. Jones & Co.** **St. Louis** www.edwardjones.com	30,916	1,010	8%	10.7%	4	**>> Turnover among the IT ranks at this financial services firm was just 7% last year.** A flat organization, the IT group drafts "responsibility statements" rather than job descriptions, and cubicles are the workspace for leaders and nonleaders alike. Flexible work arrangements include job sharing, working at home, or working longer hours and fewer days. The firm has not had any layoffs since 1969. When the operations unit moved about 120 jobs to its campus in Tempe, Ariz., workers could move to Arizona or transition to different jobs in St. Louis.
59	**Eastman Chemical Co.** **Kingsport, Tenn.** www.eastman.com	10,359	343	5%	7%	7	**>> Divided into three business segments, this manufacturer produces chemicals, fibers and plastics.** The IT group receives training and gains experience in the latest technologies, including e-commerce, Web applications, service-oriented architecture and Web services. Rotating assignments outside of IT are offered. IT professionals can decide whether to advance via a technical ladder or a managerial ladder. Flexible work schedules include the option to work from home using company-provided high-speed Internet access.
60	**Ford Motor Co.** **Dearborn, Mich.** www.ford.com	124,270	3,503	3.7%	10%	20	**>> This auto giant manufactures the Aston Martin, Ford, Jaguar, Lincoln, Mercury and Volvo brands.** IT employees are involved in researching and developing applications for Ford vehicles, such as streaming audio and video, Wi-Fi capabilities, GPS navigation, Internet search and VoIP. Supervisors meet regularly to discuss employees' developmental needs and provide learning opportunities, stretch assignments and special projects. Employees are often paired with technical mentors. Employee resource groups include the Ford Hispanic Network, the Ford African Ancestry Network, the IT Diversity Action Team and IT Women in Leadership. Through the Ford Volunteer Corps, IT employees can take on voluntary international service assignments that last two to three years.
61	**National Information Solutions Cooperative Inc.** **Lake St. Louis, Mo.** www.nisc.coop	562	375	4%	10%	10	**>> NISC provides data processing services and billing software for the energy and telecommunications industries.** A comprehensive medical plan is provided to employees and their families at no cost, and NISC reimburses 100% of tuition for employees after one year of service. Educational opportunities include lunchtime learning sessions, and in-house and computer-based training. In 2005, NISC opened a fully equipped IT training facility called the National IT Learning Center that enables employees and customers to become certified in NISC software. The company offers an employee-administered benevolence fund designed to help employees and their families in times of need or tragedy that employees can contribute to through payroll deductions, with matching contributions from NISC.
62	**Allstate Insurance Co.** **Northbrook, Ill.** www.allstate.com	37,216	4,171	8%	5%	15	**>> Allstate is the second-largest U.S. personal insurer, selling auto, homeowner's and life insurance in Canada and the U.S.** The IT group provides training allowances, sponsors training events on-site and encourages job rotations to keep IT closely aligned with the business. IT employees helped equip the company's field workers with wireless tools that have made them more mobile and increased their speed in serving hurricane victims. Employees are given desktop tools, Web conferencing, mobile applications and streaming media software to help them work remotely. Flexible work schedules are offered, as well as on-site IT training and online learning. Personal amenities include on-site services such as day care, gyms, cafeterias and convenience stores.
63	**Comerica Inc.** **Detroit** www.comerica.com	11,000	709	4.9%	16%	7	**>> Each of the senior IT managers at this bank holding company hosts a bimonthly luncheon to discuss diversity issues.** All IT employees have a requirement in their annual performance plan to complete a "Walk-A-Mile" session – a structured learning activity that matches IT workers with key clients. The Information Services Activity Committee was formed shortly after a large merger to enable the transition from two entities to one. The group has expanded its charter and now helps to enhance the work environment through social activities and community service, planning events such as casual days, Halloween costume contests and employee appreciation days.
64	**Sallie Mae** **Reston, Va.** www.salliemae.com	10,899	891	7%	19%	2	**>> The No. 1 source of education loans in the U.S., Sallie Mae strengthens the working relationship between IT and business operations with periodic shifts of IT workers into business units and of business workers into IT.** The IT division is implementing the IT Infrastructure Library, a collection of best practices for IT management. The company uses components of the Zachman framework to guide service-oriented architecture and IT investment decisions. All employees earn stock options.
65	**Quest Diagnostics Inc.** **Lyndhurst, N.J.** www.questdiagnostics.com	42,000	1,847	8%	13%	4	**>> This clinical laboratory company provides diagnostic services to physicians and patients around the clock.** Most IT employees work the first shift and can start their workdays as early as 6 a.m. or as late as 9 a.m. Second- and third-shift workers earn shift differential payments. IT employees are often able to work from home. Quest offers medical, dental, life and short- and long-term disability insurance, flexible spending accounts and employee assistance programs. In May 2005, the company started the Healthy Quest initiative, which includes free diagnostic medical screenings for employees and their partners. Another benefit allows employees to accrue hours that can then be used for vacation, personal needs and incidental sick time. Based on years of service, employees can accrue up to 38 days annually for personal use.
66	**PHH Mortgage Corp.** **Mt. Laurel, N.J.** www.phhmortgage.com	5,686	301	13.6%	16.3%	3	**>> Jeans and sneakers are typical attire at this residential mortgage company, a division of PHH Corp.** IT employees are offered flexible schedules and home Internet reimbursement averaging $600 annually. Other perks include game rooms and full-service exercise rooms in every building. An on-site wellness center offers free blood pressure screenings and flu shots. Employees are eligible for adoption reimbursements of up to $5,000 per child, domestic partner benefits, and tuition reimbursement of $4,000 annually at the undergraduate level and $6,000 annually at the graduate level. At monthly leadership meetings with the IT group, the CIO introduces new technologies, presents projects and initiatives, and encourages attendees to ask questions. Each major functional business area has an IT advocate who acts as the IT liaison and helps identify where IT may need to be engaged in business projects, initiatives and process re-engineering.
67	**Raymond James Financial Inc.** **St. Petersburg, Fla.** www.raymondjames.com	5,324	720	11.6%	14.4%	4	**>> The IT department at this investment and financial planning services provider has created systems for regulatory compliance alerts, business intelligence, customized trade confirmations, Internet-based research and imaging workflow.** Training opportunities include industry- and technology-related courses, membership in professional associations, the opportunity to attend conferences, and a mentoring program. IT workers are given time off to help others in the community and to participate in special company events and activities, such as a Halloween decorating contest and a fall festival fundraiser. A buddy system pairs new IT workers with more senior ones to help in the acclimation process. All employees receive a securities discount on trade transactions.
68	**National Rural Electric Cooperative Association** **Arlington, Va.** www.nreca.coop	709	119	7%	25%	10	**>> The NRECA represents consumer-owned power cooperatives.** For the third consecutive year, results from the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey, which measures workplace satisfaction, put IT workers in the 95th percentile relative to the Gallup database. IT employees work with the latest technology, including wireless and desktop systems, .Net-based architectures, advanced security technologies, multimedia Web applications and more. The company offers its IT staffers training and educational assistance, including tuition reimbursement. In any given year, about 15% of IT employees receive tuition reimbursement.

Continued on page 64

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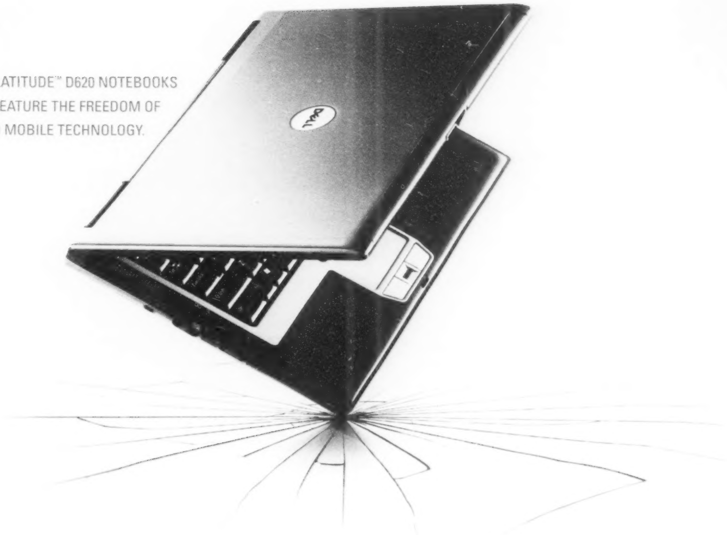

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Satisfaction

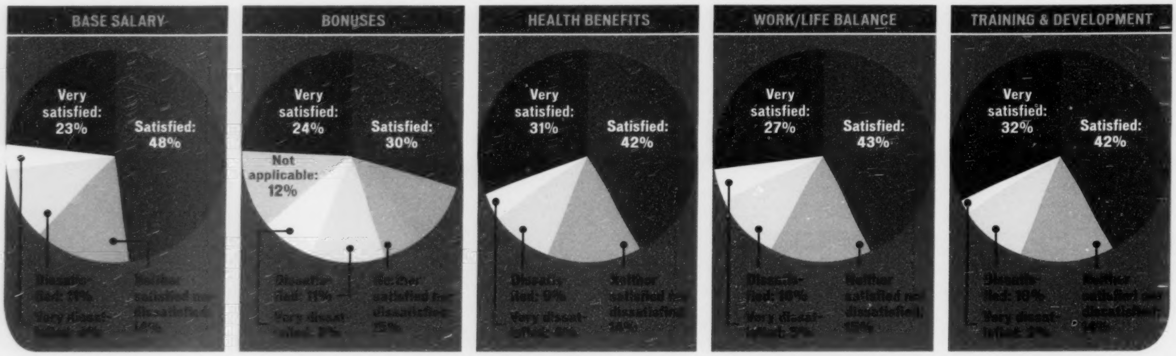
Morale among employees at the Best Places to Work in IT is running high – as is the stress:

IT DEPARTMENT MORALE

Excellent	19%
Very good	33%
Good	26%
Fair	15%
Poor	7%

WORKPLACE STRESS LEVEL

Very stressful	9%
Stressful	24%
Somewhat stressful	46%
Not very stressful	18%
Not at all stressful	3%



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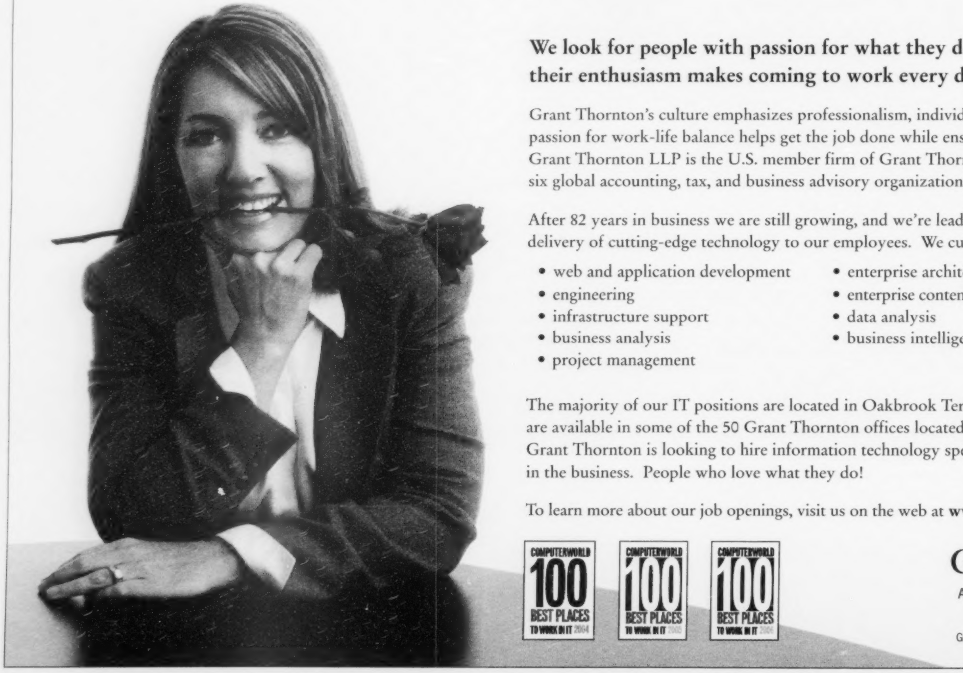

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COMPUTERWORLD 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2005
COMPUTERWORLD 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2006

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– Human Rights Campaign

"Top Corporation for Women-Owned Businesses"
– Women's Business Enterprise National Council

Pfizer

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SPECIAL REPORT

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
69	**HSBC North America Holdings Inc.** **Prospect Heights, Ill.** www.us.hsbc.com	47,335	3,430	6.6%	9.3%	9	**>> A subsidiary of HSBC Holding PLC, this company offers personal and commercial banking, mortgage, consumer finance, private banking, insurance and corporate investment banking services.** Career development opportunities include training and coaching, and technical and nontechnical classes on subjects such as internal consulting, project management and mentoring. The Catch a Career on the HSBC Express, or CACHE, program lets new employees meet members of the HSBC technology and services senior management team and employees from different areas of the technology unit. Employees learn about career development, training, networking and the internal consulting model. More than 1,000 Web-based classes are offered.
70	**University of Oklahoma** **Norman, Okla.** www.ou.edu	11,000	177	5%	3%	5	**>> Created by the Oklahoma Territorial Legislature in 1890, the University of Oklahoma is a doctoral-degree-granting research university, with 20 colleges and more than 30,000 students.** Employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement and have the opportunity to hold adjunct faculty positions. Cultural enrichment opportunities include access to campus art and natural history museums. Family-friendly benefits include flexible schedules, scholarship programs for employees' dependents and on-site day care. Academic, administrative and student-centered leadership development and mentoring programs are also offered. Annual IT staff awards recognize exceptional performance, community service and leadership; winners receive bonuses.
71	**Antares Management Solutions Inc.** **Westlake, Ohio** www.antaressolutions.com	507	387	8.8%	8.9%	5	**>> Benefits at this IT and business process outsourcing firm include prescription drug coverage, flexible spending accounts and retirement plans.** Other perks include employee assistance programs, on-site fitness centers or discounts on memberships to local health clubs, Weight Watchers programs, free health screenings and brown-bag lunch sessions that address topics such as stress management. A new, more flexible telecommuting option allows IT workers to perform their daily tasks from home via an Internet connection and a VPN. The company also offers tuition assistance, certification reimbursement, on-site training, a computer boot camp, a project management program and computer-based training on subjects such as desktop applications and programming languages.
72	**Temple University** **Philadelphia** www.temple.edu	5,433	242	4.5%	5%	5	**>> This Philadelphia university enrolls more than 34,000 students and has 17 schools and colleges.** Recent technology initiatives include the development of identity management, data warehousing and disaster recovery systems, as well as a tool for tracking research projects. IT workers have also received enhanced training in Oracle, Linux and Microsoft software. Temple offers family tuition benefits, including full undergraduate tuition for dependent children, access to health club facilities and participation in a full range of university programs. The IT group has its own internal training department that provides courses to help individuals develop in their chosen areas of expertise. Recently, 14 IT staffers completed TCP/IP training, and 40 completed project management training.
73	**Schneider National Inc.** **Green Bay, Wis.** www.schneider.com	20,505	434	9.3%	2%	5	**>> This truckload and intermodal service company provides work/life balance programs, including flexible work options and a free counseling service for help with personal choices and special needs, including child care, elder care, parenting, college alternatives for children and transitioning to retirement living.** In 2005, Schneider was recognized as an AARP Featured Employer for its commitment to recruiting, hiring and retaining older workers. IT workers in the military receive full pay and benefits for up to 18 months while they're on active duty. In addition, each worker in the military is assigned a family sponsor from the company who stays in touch with his family or spouse to assist with benefits questions, family issues and other matters.
74	**State Street Corp.** **Boston** www.statestreet.com	12,994	2,754	11%	26.1%	3	**>> This Boston-based financial services firm spends 20% to 25% of its operating budget each year on technology.** Employees are offered flexible work arrangements, including the opportunity to work from home or an alternative location. IT managers assist employees in their career growth and identify and develop key performers. Individual career plans are designed to help employees develop a range of competencies for improved depth and breadth of departmental knowledge. Managers are required to evaluate employees semiannually. At State Street Global Advisors, the investment management arm of State Street Corp., an IT career development and mentorship program includes 30 year-round internships and ongoing opportunities for employee advancement via lateral moves, lunchtime learning workshops, and training in written and verbal communication, project management, Web technology and securities industry subjects.
75	**Calence LLC** **Tempe, Ariz.** www.calence.com	521	521	5%	33%	5	**>> Formed this year through the merger of Calence Inc. and Avnet Enterprise Solutions, this IT company builds and maintains voice, video, data and wireless networks for financial services firms, health care organizations and public schools.** IT employees learn the latest technologies, including Calence's own networking technologies, and build IT systems in advanced environments and lab environments. The company supports IT workers gaining certifications and pegs compensation rates to industry standards. It also sponsors team events and fosters a culture of teamwork.
76	**Miami-Dade County** **Miami** www.miamidade.gov	623	623	4.5%	5%	21	**>> One of the largest municipal governments in the southeastern U.S., serving some 2 million residents, Miami-Dade offers its employees medical, dental and vision coverage, and discounts on products and services such as computers, car rentals and admission to sporting events.** Work areas in the main facility have been refurbished in recent years, with new carpeting and redesigned office and cubicle space. Recent IT projects include the development of a system supporting the computer-aided dispatch of 911 calls, a new Web portal and the county's 311 Answer Center, which provides a single point of contact for information about many county services. The 311 center's number became the hot line for citizens in the aftermaths of hurricanes Katrina and Wilma and has received more than 1 million calls since it became operational. The county is seeking to expand telecommuting options for IT workers.
77	**Sharp HealthCare** **San Diego** www.sharp.com	13,343	303	11%	7%	5	**>> This group of hospitals and health care facilities in the San Diego area includes four acute-care and three specialty hospitals.** It employs 2,600 physicians. IT employees work on projects that cover a range of technologies, including electronic medical records, digital radiology imaging, wireless, biometrics and Web technologies. Employees gather three times a year for food and fun – at a summer picnic, a Thanksgiving potluck and a winter holiday lunch. The IT department holds quarterly meetings to help employees stay connected.
78	**W.W. Grainger Inc.** **Lake Forest, Ill.** www.grainger.com	15,550	500	2.7%	4%	5	**>> Grainger distributes supplies such as compressors, motors, signs, lighting and welding equipment, and hand and power tools through 600 branches and 20 distribution centers in the U.S, Canada and Mexico.** The IT department's performance management program emphasizes ongoing development of hard and soft skills and supports an alignment of IT resources to corporate objectives and results. IT employees recently completed an enterprisewide SAP project, with applications running on Linux. Supporting the SAP environment is a new nationwide communications network that uses VoIP technologies.
79	**Discovery Communications Inc.** **Silver Spring, Md.** www.discovery.com	3,508	332	6.3%	16.8%	1	**>> The company reaches 86 million households through its Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, Travel Channel and Animal Planet cable networks, and it operates Discovery Channel retail stores.** Discovery's LifeWorks Strategies team offers more than 40 programs for health and wellness, employee and family services, workplace flexibility, community involvement and management support. In late 2004, an on-site, full-service wellness center opened, staffed with medical professionals who serve as primary care physicians; it offers specialty services such as on-site mammograms, physical exams and complete blood work, free of charge. Each summer, Discovery sponsors an Employee Body Challenge Competition to promote healthier lifestyles through exercise, nutrition and overall personal wellness.
80	**The Reader's Digest Association Inc.** **Pleasantville, N.Y.** www.rd.com	2,400	146	5%	15%	5	**>> Reader's Digest is one of the world's most popular general-interest magazines; it has 100 million readers and is translated into some 20 languages.** The IT team participates in activities such as cook-offs and trips to ball games and other events. Many IT employees work at home some days. The IT team holds monthly meetings with the business side, and IT workers are often included on cross-functional teams. Employees are connected by an intranet, allowing IT staffers to collaborate on global projects. Other perks include a gym, a cafe, a company store, an on-site dry cleaner, an art gallery and a salon.

Continued on page 68

Speaking of Opportunities...

COMPUTERWORLD 100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2006

Key to Sutter Health's business plan, the role of Sutter Health Information Technology is to make electronic data and communications available to Sutter Health employees, providers and patients to support the health and well-being of the community, enhance patient care and safety, and improve business processes and performance. Information Technology's key approaches to meet these needs consists of the Applications, Telecommunications, Project Management, Web, and Technology.

What sets us apart from all the other companies is the commitment of our employees, each uniquely focused to the care of our patients. We also offer respectful, diverse work environments and continue to embrace technology to improve both the patient and employee experience. And, over the next few years, the entire Sutter Health network will be fully connected to an advanced electronic health record (EHR) system. Not only will this powerful tool ensure better, safer and more efficient health care, it will also enable patients to view their own health histories and test results securely online.

Chosen as one of the Top 100 Best Places to Work in IT by Computerworld Magazine, Sutter Health Information Technology continues to review IT optimization across our affiliates, regions and entire enterprise. We invite you to join us in one of the following opportunities located in Sacramento, CA:

EPIC Revenue Cycle Implementation Group

- Application Coordinator – Admitting
- Application Coordinator – Master File (CDM)
- Application Coordinator – Reimbursement Contracts
- Application Coordinator – Scheduling
- Business Analyst – Hospital Billing Claims
- Business Analyst – Workflow Hospital Billing
- Business Analyst – OPTIO
- Business Analyst – Registration/Admitting
- Senior Developer
- Technical Analyst I – Report Writer
- Technical Analyst II – Workstation Management
- Technical Developer/Interface Analyst

EHR (Electronic Health Record) Group

- Application Coordinator - Ambulatory
- Application Coordinator – Clinical Documentation
- Application Coordinator – Orders
- Application Team Coordinator – Pharmacy
- Clinical Practice Model Project Leader
- Senior Business Analyst – EHR Interface
- Senior Technical Analyst

Contact Monica Lunardi, IT Recruiter at
lunardm@sutterhealth.org
or visit our website at
www.sutterhealth.org/employment

Sutter Health
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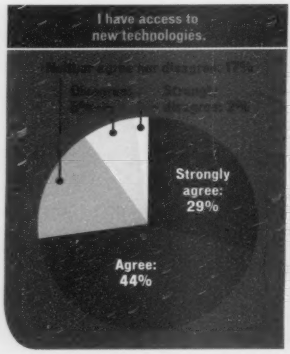
Information Technology

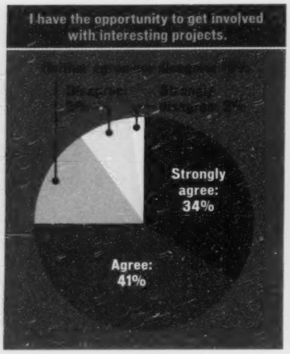
***Pictured above are Sutter Health Information Technology employees.**

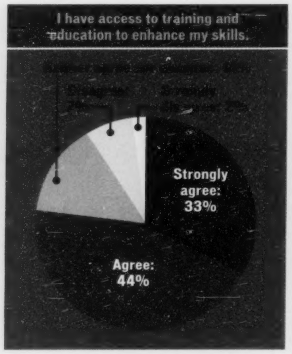
EOE

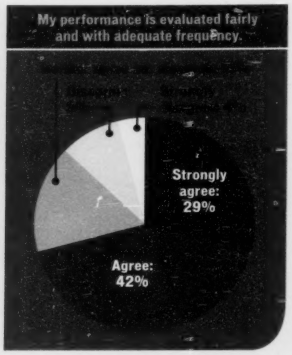
Tools & Training

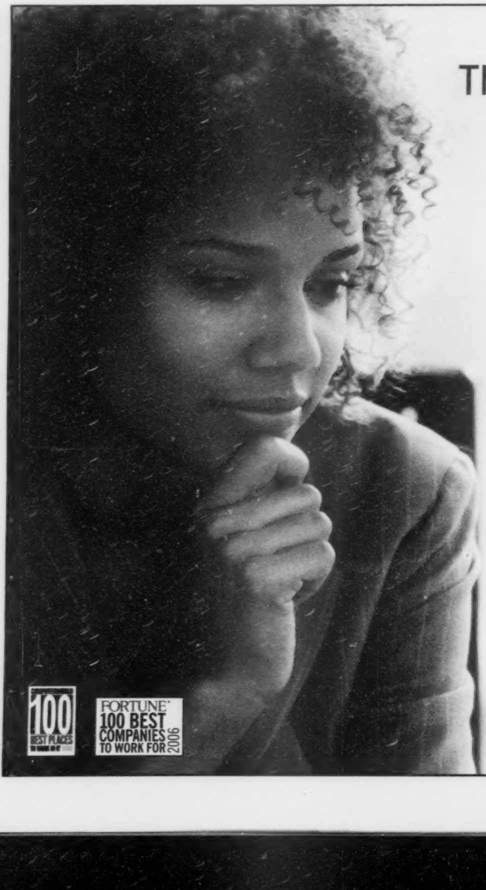
For most IT workers, a challenging work environment is key to job satisfaction. In our survey of Best Places employees, 73% said they have access to **new technologies**, and three quarters said they are given the opportunity to work on **interesting projects**. And 77% said they have the **training opportunities** available to enhance their skills.


I have access to new technologies.


I have the opportunity to get involved with interesting projects.


I have access to training and education to enhance my skills.


My performance is evaluated fairly and with adequate frequency.


100 BEST PLACES
FORTUNE 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR 2006

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- Network and Communications Engineers
- ERP Systems Architect

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MITRE

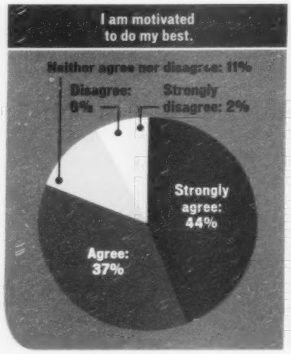
Plenty of IT people cure viruses.
Ours save lives.

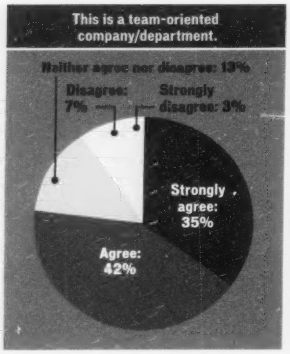
Nemours is proud to be named to ComputerWorld's "Top 100 Best Places to Work in IT" for the second year in a row. Congratulations to all of our IT Associates, who've made us a leader in children's health care informatics and one of the world's best places to train and work in IT. And thanks to all of our Associates, who used our industry-leading informatics systems to deliver exceptional care to nearly a quarter of a million children last year. At Nemours, there are those who take care of patients, and those who take care of the people who take care of patients. And all of them play a crucial role in developing best practices in quality and safety, setting national precedents and most importantly, saving lives.

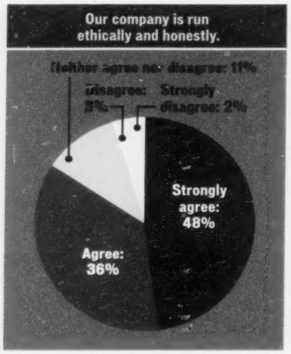
Nemours

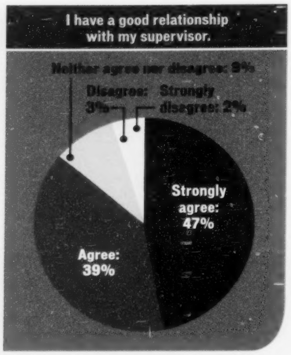
www.Nemours.org

SPECIAL REPORT


I am motivated to do my best.


This is a team-oriented company/department.


Our company is run ethically and honestly.


I have a good relationship with my supervisor.

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
81	**Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co.** **Columbus, Ohio** www.nationwide.com	34,626	4,977	5.7%	12.2%	NA	**>> Nationwide offers personal and commercial property and casualty coverage, life insurance, financial services, professional liability and workers' compensation insurance, and managed health care services.** A skills assessment application lets IT workers evaluate their skill levels for their current jobs and for other IT jobs they might want to pursue. This year, those assessment results will be used to determine skills gaps in the department and identify training opportunities to help close those gaps. Communication channels include town hall meetings, team lunches and one-on-one meetings. Many IT workers use flextime to manage their work schedules. Telecommuting, part-time schedules and job-sharing options are also offered.
82	**GMAC Insurance Holdings Inc.** **Winston-Salem, N.C.** www.gmac123.com	2,548	397	7.1%	8.8%	10	**>> This financial services subsidiary of General Motors Corp. provides automobile insurance to about 1 million policyholders.** The IT department stresses open communication and investment in technology. IT employees are allotted a minimum of 10 days of training. GM employees and their families receive discounts on products and services, such as mortgages, automobiles, insurance, books, and Internet and cell phone service, through the Family First program.
83	**Aetna Inc.** **Hartford, Conn.** www.aetna.com	27,543	3,012	8%	7%	3	**>> This health insurance company provides coverage to almost 15 million individual policyholders, more than 13 million dental plan members and more than 14 million group insurance members.** Aetna uses all major operating systems, applications and infrastructure technologies, giving IT workers a chance to diversify their training and career opportunities. IT employees have access to the most up-to-date work-at-home technologies. The company also offers flexible work schedules, mentoring programs and project rotations. IT workers can receive reimbursement on college tuition up to a $3,000 annual cap.
84	**LexisNexis Group** **Dayton, Ohio** www.lexisnexis.com	10,005	1,951	3%	3%	5	**>> This subsidiary of Reed Elsevier is a publisher of legal, business, government and academic materials, offering more than 30 products to customers via the Web, dial-up connections, CD-ROMs and printed materials.** The company sponsors Employee Spirit, a volunteer committee that organizes health and fitness programs, sports leagues and athletic tournaments, an annual corporate challenge road race in conjunction with other local businesses, a Toastmasters club, a Weight Watchers program, religious study and prayer groups, and brown-bag lunchtime workshops. The committee also supports a dry-cleaning service and hosts special annual events for employees and their families. Immediately after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, LexisNexis offered emergency funding to help affected employees pay for shelter, clothing and personal necessities.
85	**The George Washington University** **Washington** www.gwu.edu	6,000	230	19%	NP	14	**>> When it was founded in 1821 as Columbian College, the school had three faculty members, one tutor and 30 students.** In 1904, the name of the institution was changed to The George Washington University, and it now enrolls more than 19,000 undergraduate and graduate students in nine schools. Employees and their families can earn degrees at little or no cost, depending on the type of school and the degree program they choose. Other benefits include training programs and a retirement savings plan with matching contributions.
86	**Burlington Coat Factory Warehouse Corp.** **Burlington, N.J.** www.coat.com	27,000	243	14%	3%	3	**>> This retailer, which sells coats and other apparel, bath items, furniture, gifts, jewelry, linens and shoes, was acquired by affiliates of Bain Capital earlier this year.** IT employees are offered flexible work schedules, telecommuting options and the chance to work with the latest technology. Workers are rewarded with promotions, increased responsibility, additional compensation, bonuses and extra time off.
87	**Honeywell International Inc.** **Morristown, N.J.** www.honeywell.com	49,603	1,278	5%	10%	5	**>> This aerospace company's largest business segment, Honeywell Aerospace, makes products such as turbofan and turboprop engines and flight safety and landing systems.** An IT career path outlines roles within each job family, with a set of competencies and expected proficiency levels. Using these career paths, IT employees can conduct self-assessments and create learning plans, either for a current or future role within IT. The IT group works with Web-enabled e-commerce applications and is now pilot-testing RFID applications. Thanks to advanced collaboration and connectivity tools, employees can telecommute and work flexible hours. All IT groups in Honeywell are now at least Level 3 in the Six Sigma process improvement program.
88	**BAE Systems Information Technology** **McLean, Va.** www.baesystems.com	4,410	150	24.3%	10%	5	**>> This provider of IT services, subsidiary of BAE Systems PLC, is one of the largest foreign companies in the U.S. defense market, with U.S. headquarters in McLean, Va.** Each employee receives 23 paid days off with 11 federal holidays per year and is eligible for stock appreciation rights and participation in an employee pension plan. Current employees can change jobs within the company for career enhancement or personal and organizational development. Program managers work directly with human resources personnel to analyze current, near-term and long-term company staffing needs, so employees involved in projects that are ending experience minimal loss of productivity and personal career disruption.
89	**Standard Pacific Corp.** **Irvine, Calif.** www.standardpacifichomes.com	2,633	80	10%	15%	5	**>> The company builds about 9,100 homes annually, mostly in California and Florida, but also in Arizona, North and South Carolina, Colorado, Nevada and Texas.** Employees with one year of service receive a 1% discount on the purchase of a new Standard Pacific home; those with two or more years of service receive 3% discounts.

Continued on page 70

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The incredible speed of Gigabit is now available at an affordable price. What's more, this comes from a trusted company whose dedication to quality and reliability allows us to offer the industry's leading lifetime warranty. With ProCurve's comprehensive series of Gigabit switches, businesses can now confidently and cost-effectively adopt Gigabit right across the network.

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SPECIAL REPORT

	BEST PLACE	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL IT EMPLOYEES	IT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER	IT EMPLOYEE PROMOTIONS	TRAINING DAYS PER IT EMPLOYEE	WHAT'S SPECIAL?
90	**Pfizer Inc.** **New York** www.pfizer.com	44,000	860	10%	10%	5	**>> Pfizer is the world's largest research-based pharmaceuticals firm, manufacturing brands such as Viagra, Celebrex, Zoloft and Lipitor, as well as over-the-counter remedies Benadryl and Sudafed.** A new health management system for employees encourages prevention and proactive health care. Other benefits include coverage for domestic partners, an elder care program and full prescription drug coverage.
91	**Nielsen Media Research Inc.** **New York** www.nielsenmedia.com	6,645	488	9%	6%	6	**>> This media researcher and subsidiary of VNU produces weekly TV ratings based on audience data from randomly selected households.** IT employees are given the opportunity to learn and exercise new skills and create a balance between their professional and personal lives. Innovation is encouraged, and new technical challenges are available.
92	**OCLC Online Computer Library Center Inc.** **Dublin, Ohio** www.oclc.org	977	336	9.7%	5.6%	4	**>> Founded in 1967, OCLC Online Computer Library Center is a nonprofit computer library service and research organization.** More than 54,000 libraries in 109 countries use OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend and preserve library materials. Alternative work schedules include flexible hours, compressed workweeks, reduced work hours, job sharing and telecommuting. After two years of service, employees can participate in a company-funded retirement plan to which the company contributes 7.15% of an employee's salary. Other benefits include an on-site fitness facility and wellness programs such as health screenings, massage therapy and reflexology.
93	**Saint Luke's Health System Inc.** **Kansas City, Mo.** www.saintlukeshealthsystem.org	7,056	118	7.6%	5.7%	18	**>> Saint Luke's Health System Information Technology is a member of the Saint Luke's Health System, a not-for-profit regional health care system.** The IT group supports hospitals and physician organizations from a central location in Lee's Summit, Mo., with an 11,000-square-foot data center. The IT group usually fills positions with people who have business and clinical experience and teaches them the information systems aspects of their jobs. IT staffers receive personalized education plans geared to their professional career development. An initiative known as the Appreciative Inquiry program allows employees to give input about improvements they would like to see in the IT department.
94	**CNA Financial Corp.** **Chicago** www.cna.com	8,202	1,140	12.1%	5.6%	5	**>> This insurance provider has earmarked more than $200 million for new software development this year, part of a $1 billion technology investment planned over the next three years.** A recent review identified applications that were to be sunset, and 71 of those applications have now been outsourced, freeing up the equivalent of 40 full-time employees to work on more important programs. Rewards programs include bonuses and an annual IT awards ceremony to recognize the achievements of employees. More than 200 staffers received individual and team awards at the 2005 event.
95	**MemorialCare Medical Centers** **Long Beach, Calif.** www.memorialcare.org	9,825	175	5.7%	9.2%	2	**>> The IT group at this not-for-profit hospital network supports 200 applications on multiple platforms.** The group also works with multiple technologies, including storage, clustering, VoIP, redundant data centers, firewalls, virtual LANs, and wireless data and voice networks. The IT organization is diversified; each hospital campus has its own staff with a lead director who reports to the corporate CIO. Committees bring campus employees together in value-added teams, data operations teams and project review groups, sometimes via weekly conference calls.
96	**Kennametal Inc.** **Latrobe, Pa.** www.kennametal.com	7,000	181	0%	2%	4	**>> Kennametal manufactures metal-cutting tools, and mining and highway construction equipment. It also offers engineering services.** Training is offered to help employees improve both technical and soft skills. Communication channels for sharing information on major activities within the department include semiannual off-site meetings, a monthly IT newsletter, an IT Web page on the company intranet and periodic group meetings. Many IT employees have traveled to countries such as Germany, England, France, Brazil, China, Japan and India to support SAP implementation projects. A summer off-site meeting includes a day of golf.
97	**Charles Schwab & Co.** **San Francisco** www.schwab.com	14,024	1,528	8%	2.3%	5	**>> This discount broker serves more than 7 million individual and institutional clients from approximately 270 offices in the U.S.** All employees, regardless of level, are eligible for annual bonuses. The company sponsors a volunteer day and has a 50% match program for employees' charitable contributions. Employees with five years of service are entitled to a paid four-week sabbatical. The CIO answers employee e-mail within 24 hours and has one-on-one meetings with staffers.
98	**Fairfax County Government** **Fairfax, Va.** www.fairfaxcounty.gov	11,739	300	12%	5%	4	**>> Incorporated in 1742, Fairfax County is the most populous jurisdiction in the state of Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area.** A program called Framework for Excellence lets employees at all levels of the organization build leadership and performance skills. The benefits package includes a retirement plan. There are core hours that employees are required to be in the office, but flexible and/or compressed work schedules are available based on work needs, with supervisor approval.
99	**J.C. Penney Co.** **Plano, Texas** www.jcpenney.net	143,937	1,174	11.5%	11.5%	16	**>> J.C. Penney is one of the largest brick-and-mortar, catalog and e-commerce retailers in the U.S.** The IT group works with the latest technologies, including .Net and DB2. The average tenure for IT workers is 14 years. The training program includes more than 2,000 technical courses, 50 general management courses and an online reference library of more than 1,500 e-books. Technical classes are presented weekly. The company's headquarters facility is a 1.9-million-square-foot complex on a 125-acre site that includes large open spaces, livestock ranching, a six-acre lake and walking trails. On-site amenities include a fitness center, a child care center, a health center, a sundries shop, a full-service mail and shipping center, visitor centers, a cafeteria, coffee shops, private dining facilities and training facilities, including distance-learning studios.
100	**Infosys Technologies Ltd.** **Fremont, Calif.** www.infosys.com	6,602	6,275	15.4%	8.4%	16	**>> One of India's top technology consulting firms, Infosys has U.S. headquarters in Fremont, Calif., and operations in more than 15 countries.** Infosys benchmarks its compensation packages against those of best-in-class companies to ensure that its salaries are competitive. Training and ongoing learning programs focus on technical processes, management and leadership skills. An integrated performance management program helps identify employees' training needs, and an integrated training program addresses those needs through technical and personal development.

BEST PLACES TO WORK ADVERTISER INDEX

Please see the IT Careers section starting on PAGE 82 for the following Best Places to Work sponsors.

- **American Family Insurance Group**
  www.americanfamilyinsurance.jobs
- **Coventry Health Care Inc.**
  www.cvty.com
- **Discovery Communications Inc.**
  www.discovery.com
- **Ernst & Young**
  http://ey.com/us/careers
- **J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc.**
  www.jbhunt.com
- **Miami-Dade County**
  www.miamidade.gov
- **Mount Carmel Health System**
  www.mountcarmelhealth.com
- **Northrop Grumman Corp.**
  www.northropgrumman.com
- **Ohio Savings Bank**
  www.ohiosavings.com/careers
- **Publix Super Markets Inc.**
  www.publix.com/careers
- **Quest Diagnostics Inc.**
  www.questdiagnostics.com
- **Quicken Loans Inc.**
  www.quickenloans.com
- **Raymond James Financial Inc.**
  www.raymondjames.com
- **Reebok Ltd.**
  www.reebok.com
- **Schneider National Inc.**
  www.schneider.com
- **Sharp HealthCare**
  www.sharp.com/careers
- **Southern California Edison**
  www.sce.com
- **State Farm Insurance**
  http://statefarm.com/careers
- **SunGard**
  www.sungard.apply2jobs.com
- **University of Pennsylvania**
  www.upenn.edu/computing

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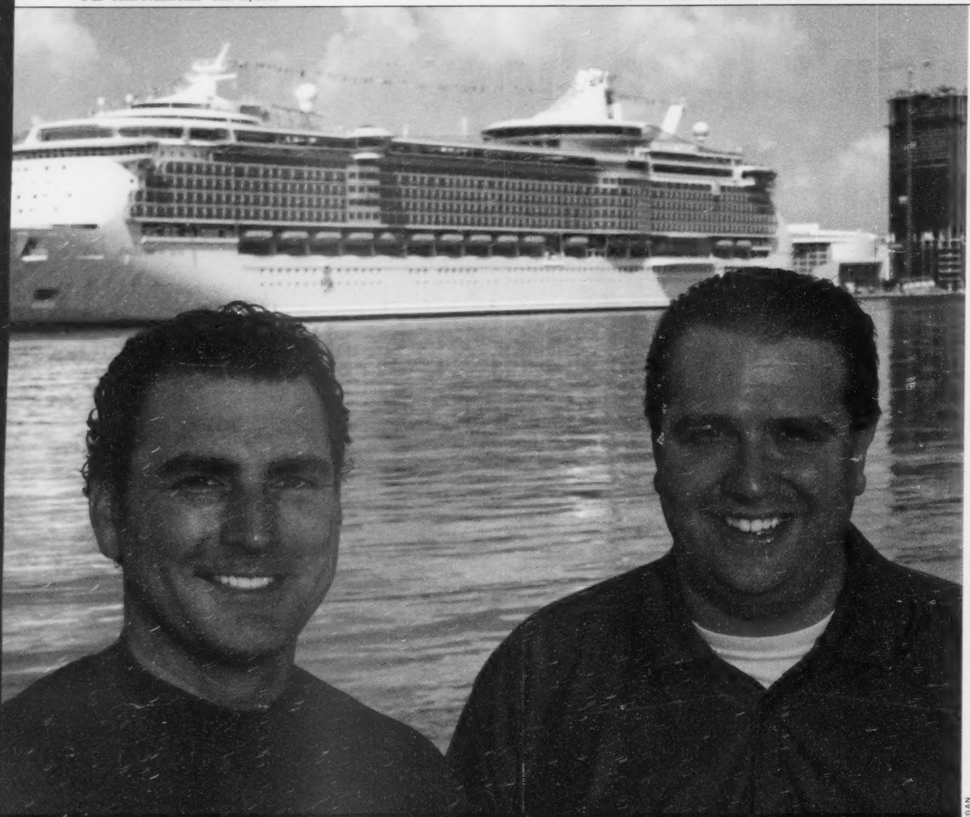

Royal Caribbean IT manager Gregory Martin (right) says it's a challenge to divvy up juicy assignments, like the one project manager Adam Grand had aboard the company's ship *Freedom of the Seas*.

RED MORGAN

BEST Balance

Dole out sexy technology assignments, yet keep day-to-day systems humming. Avoid the urge to overhire, yet keep up with business growth. Here's how Best Places make everyday balances work.

TECH FOR THE TECHIE

At Best Places, IT employees jockey for leading-edge technology projects. But who's keeping the lights on?

BY STACY COLLETT

WHEN IT COMES to enviable IT assignments, it's hard to beat Adam Grand's job as a project manager at Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (No. 7) in Miami. Grand regularly travels to Europe to install leading-edge technology on Royal Caribbean's luxury ships. In May, he finished a three-month assignment aboard the *Freedom of the Seas*, the company's newest and largest ship. He installed some of the most advanced technologies ever placed on a cruise ship — wireless and Internet applications, BizTalk tool sets and radio frequency identification (RFID) systems.

"This is just something you don't find yourself [doing] on a daily basis. Your desk becomes the ship. You're not bound to the same location day after day, and the technology is very attractive," Grand explains via satellite phone aboard *Freedom* on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic.

Nice work if you can get it — but what about the other 354 IT employees who stay ashore to keep the systems running? Don't they have any fun?

"It's a challenge," says Gregory Martin, IT manager. "There are definitely some areas [of IT] that people like or don't like," he says, such as maintenance, hardware support and the dreaded after-hours, on-call phone duty.

It's a common concern among IT managers. How does a company expose tech workers to the latest technology while maintaining and improving current systems? These Best Places reveal how they keep the lights on without

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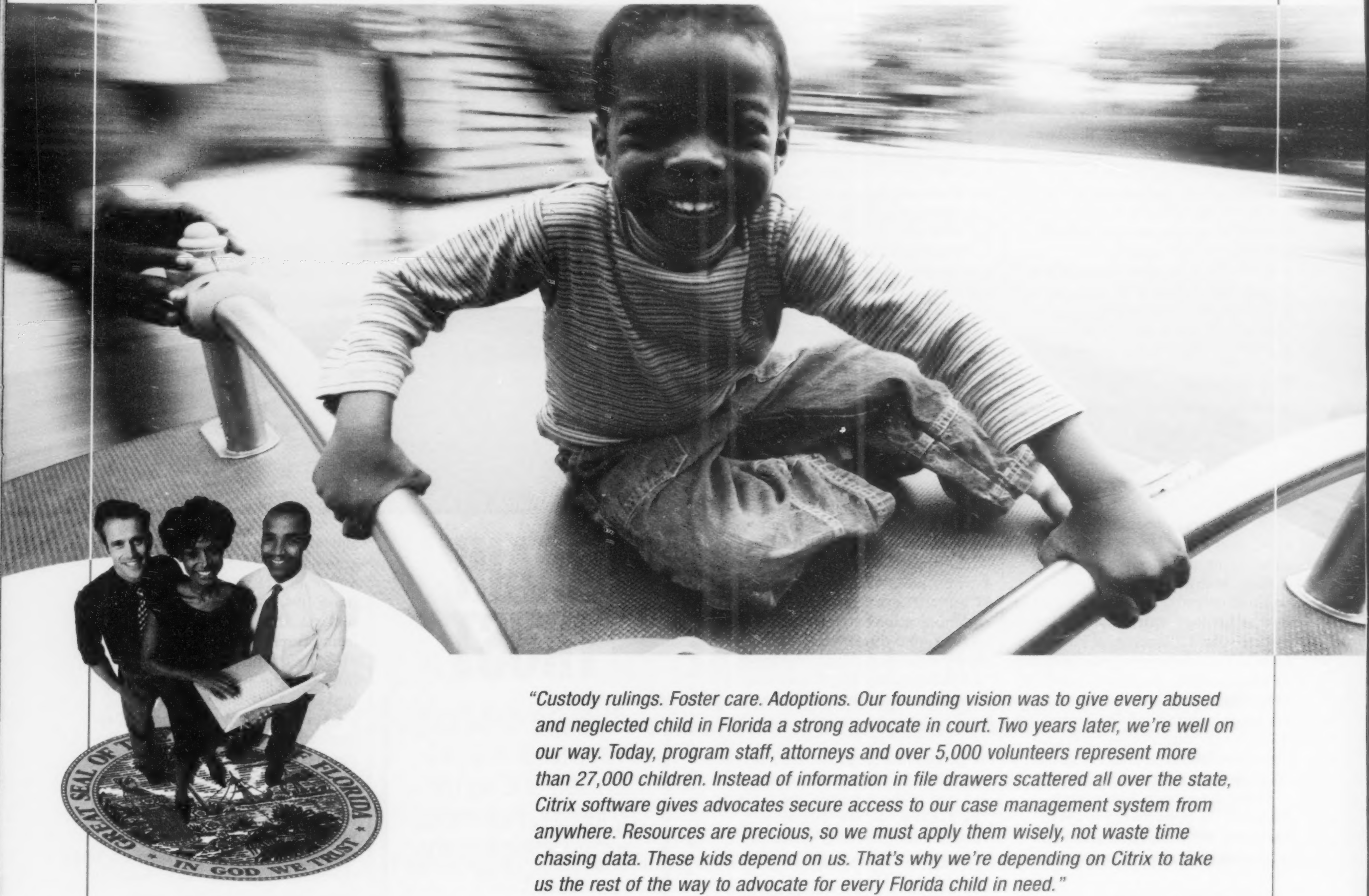

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dimming IT employees' enthusiasm.

Martin has found several ways to appease Royal Caribbean IT workers who are hungry for new technology. The company's Unite program gives all IT employees a chance to earn the coveted shipboard assignments. Staffers are nominated by their managers based on their performance.

"They set up PCs, verify the network is working, and they get out of their normal 9-to-5 for a week and a half," Martin says. Managers regularly post internal messages announcing opportunities to work with new technologies. For instance, the data warehousing team recently sent out a request for IT staffers interested in learning new extract, transform and load tools. Employees also rotate maintenance roles every nine to 18 months to avoid burnout.

"Over the next three years, 30% to 50% of our technology is being upgraded or changed," which will give more employees a chance to engage in new technology, Martin adds.

The Contest

Financial services firm Sallie Mae (No. 64) in Reston, Va., is moving toward a service-oriented architecture, creating plenty of opportunities for interesting IT work. "The real challenge is balancing [new technology] with our everyday systems and projects," says Jo Lee Hayes, vice president of enterprise technology.

Sallie Mae keeps IT staffers who work on everyday projects engaged in new technology with semiannual contests to solve IT challenges. This year, its 871 IT workers were asked how the IT team could be more agile. Some 120 ideas were submitted, and the top three are being implemented. "It's almost like 'Congratulations! Because you provided your opinion, you now get to work on the solution,'" Hayes jokes.

"That did happen. But in truth . . . I wanted the opportunity to get in there and see what I could do with it," says Rich Drew, one winner of the contest. Drew, a PC applications analyst, suggested using technology to streamline the installation of operating systems and software on Sallie Mae's 12,000 desktops. "It's not necessarily new technology, but we're . . . collaborating several technologies that are new to us," he explains.

Drew is now scripting software installs using Microsoft Windows Installer technology to streamline and standardize all PCs. "It's one thing to work on the same thing day after day; it's another thing to get accomplished at what you do and then try to find ways to make it better," Drew says.

The Trickle Down

At USAA (No. 17) in San Antonio, the most sought-after IT projects involve the Internet — WebSphere and Java programming. But that doesn't mean they'll stay hot for long. "Legacy is something you implemented yesterday. We have developed organizational discipline that allows employees maximum involvement across technologies," says Greg Schwartz, CIO and senior vice president of enterprise business operations.

So it's no surprise that about half of USAA's 2,223 IT employees actually like the maintenance role, Schwartz says, because leading-edge technology soon trickles down to them.

"Even if you have an old mainframe-style system, now that we're moving toward the Internet, you still have to interact with Java and JSPs," says lead programmer James Karras. "You take those on, then the newer technologies come out, and you still have a base you need to maintain."

The Difference

It's not just the new technology that motivates IT workers, says Brad Friedman, CIO at Burlington Coat Factory Warehouse Corp. (No. 86) in Burlington, N.J. It's being involved with projects that make a difference.

The apparel company's IT staff is working on several customer-related IT initiatives that include Java, XML communication between various systems, real-time interaction with legacy systems and high transaction volumes. But the IT unit also adds "immense functionality" to the retailer's legacy point-of-sale system, which is written in C, Friedman says.

"It's not just the techie stuff; it's the visibility stuff. Everybody wants to feel part of the company," he explains. "By working on these customer-centric initiatives, they're making a difference in the bottom line. That motivates people."

But electronic data interchange manager Sameh Ayadi adds that new technology motivates her people, too. "If I have a C programmer for 10 years, and I move him to a Java or Linux platform, you see a different push. They're more motivated when they have the most current technology." ▸

Collett is a Computerworld *contributing writer. Contact her at stcollett@aol.com.*

MARK LUINENBURG

Securian CIO Jean Delaney Nelson, pictured here with staffer Anna Sullivan, focuses on promoting from within.

BRAIN TRUST

These Best Places keep smart staffers content and secure by feeding their minds and avoiding the urge to overhire.

BY STEVE ULFELDER

"IN SOME form, our IT group has been around for 50 years," says Jean Delaney Nelson, vice president and CIO at Securian Financial Group Inc. "And we've never laid off an employee."

In a fluid era marked by outsourcing and offshoring, those words are sure to grab the attention of IT professionals. And once St. Paul, Minn.-based Securian grabs, it hangs on. The financial services firm, which changed its name from Minnesota Life last year, boasts a 97.9% IT retention rate. Small wonder, then, that the 400-worker IT group ranks No. 13 on this year's list.

Interviews with Best Places IT organizations uncover few secrets but much common ground where employee retention is concerned. The keys are careful hiring, a commitment to promoting from within, tireless training and — perhaps most important — challenging projects that offer workers the chance to handle hot technologies. Great benefits don't hurt, either.

Hiring and Promoting

It's easy to tune out when top executives talk about all the effort they put into hiring the right people. But our research indicates that Best Places companies do more than talk. For example, Securian says 95% of its present IT staff members were entry-level hires. Coupled with the company's

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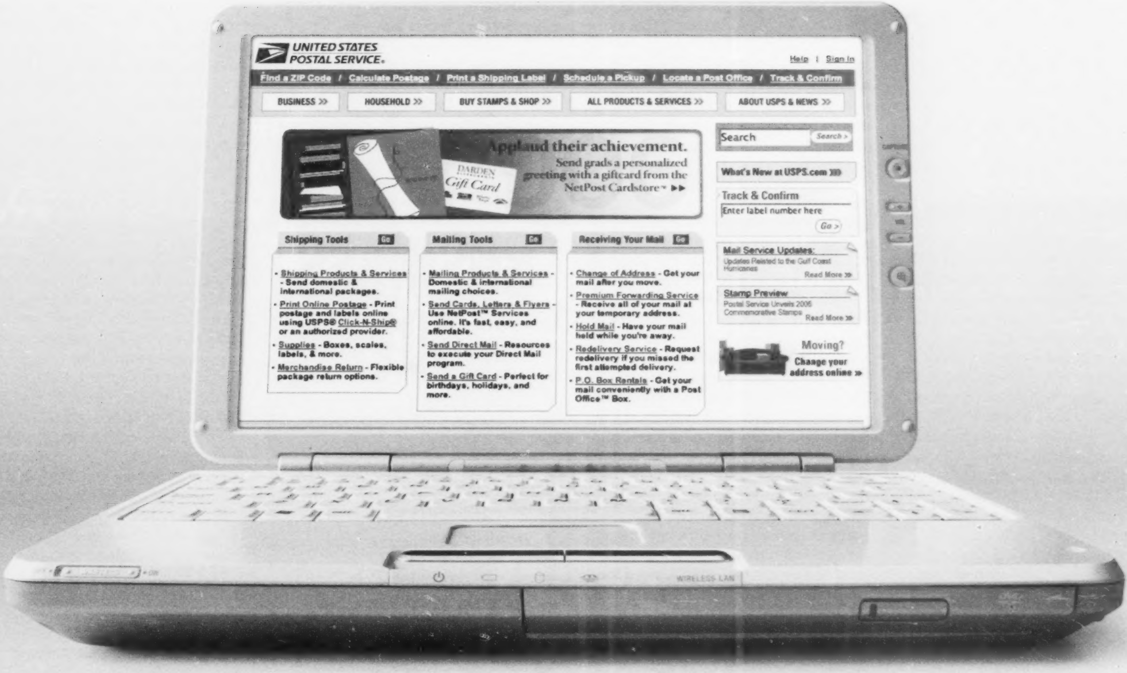
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> Some companies do huge staff-ups when the economy's strong. We don't. We'd rather move gradually.
>
> **JEAN DELANEY NELSON**, VICE PRESIDENT AND CIO, SECURIAN FINANCIAL GROUP INC.

Continued from page 74

high retention rate, this stat proves that it promotes extensively from within.

Anna Sullivan has worked at Securian for 12 years. A senior systems analyst, she says the company is tireless when it comes to staying current on technology. "I bet I've taken 50 to 75 training courses here," Sullivan says.

Once you've got a sharp worker, one way to keep him is to let him start making decisions right away. That's a tip from San Diego-based wireless vendor Qualcomm Inc., which ranks 23rd on this year's list.

"We push a lot of decision-making down in the organization, so people right out of school get involved," says Norm Fjeldheim, Qualcomm's senior vice president and CIO. As an example, he recalls how a technology team made up largely of junior staffers approached him in 2004 and suggested that virtualizing the company's servers would ease setup. In response, the CIO approved a $150,000 evaluation of VMware virtualization products.

"We saw early success, so we kept expanding the program until we ultimately put it in production," Fjeldheim says. "Now, 50% of our data center is virtual. We've saved over $3 million on hardware alone, and we can set up a server in 30 minutes." All because some young administrators were intrigued by virtualization's potential.

Hiring managers must also be careful not to underestimate the urge to build an empire when the larder is full. Securian's Delaney Nelson says this has been a key to her group's ability to avoid layoffs. "Some companies do huge staff-ups when the economy's strong," she says. "We don't. We'd rather move gradually." When Securian needs IT staffing but is unsure for how long, it uses consultants. By the time Delaney Nelson's team replaces a consultant with a full-timer, it's confident that the position will be needed in the long run.

Securian also encourages departments to borrow staffers from one another when one group is busy and another is slack. This is a reasonably trauma-free option, Sullivan says, because Securian uses a standard set of development tools. She says, "If I move to another group, I know they'll be using the same J2EE platform" that her group is using now to develop a business-to-business e-commerce Web site for the financial services department.

Training

Training and ongoing education are par for the course in Best Places IT groups. Interestingly, companies with standout IT retention rates don't boast of offering *x* hours of training per employee or *y* dollars for college courses.

Rather, their attitude is best summed up by W.W. Grainger Inc.'s Timothy Ferrarell: "When we have a job to do and skills people need to learn, we're going to get employees the training they need," says Ferrarell, senior vice president of enterprise systems at the $5.5 billion, Lake Forest, Ill.-based supplier of facilities maintenance products, which ranks No. 78. "We don't have a one-size-fits-all rule for training; it's based on company needs."

And because Grainger's business is "all about moving boxes and logistics," as Ferrarell puts it, the need for training is ceaseless. A few years back, Grainger dove into voice over IP by setting up a network that seamlessly transfers customer calls to any of the company's 400-plus branches.

More recently, Grainger threw the switch on a rollout of SAP AG's enterprise software that SAP executives called, according to Ferrarell, "one of the largest single-instance implementations ever to go live in one day." Naturally, a project of that magnitude requires extensive consulting, but, Ferrarell says, "our bias is to do these things ourselves as much as possible. We want people who understand the business to do the IT work."

Qualcomm's Fjeldheim echoes that sentiment: "When we use consultants, their job is part knowledge transfer." To that end, he says, "my goal is always to get the consultants out of here before a new system goes into production. It doesn't always happen that way, but it's always the goal."

Because 95% of its IT workers begin at the entry level, Securian is also committed to extensive training. In addition to using a corporate educator to learn soft skills such as leadership and communication, the IT organization actually has seven full-time people "who do nothing but train and develop IT associates," Delaney Nelson says. New hires spend their first three months in an entry-level application-development training program, and the minimal goal is two weeks of ongoing education per staffer per year.

IT groups with great retention records also feature a host of team-building programs and outings, from trips to Major League Baseball games at Qualcomm to visits by the famous Second City improvisational comedy troupe at Grainger. But what these companies truly provide is nectar to technologists: a challenge.

"We're constantly putting in new technologies where there's a business reason to do so," Fjeldheim says. "IT people love that challenge — they don't want to be stuck maintaining 30-year-old technologies." ◆

Ulfelder is a freelance writer in Southboro, Mass.

BUSINESS 101

Best Places keep staffers' business skills as sharp as their tech smarts with job rotations and mentoring.

BY THOMAS HOFFMAN

WHETHER THEY'RE network administrators, IT project managers or LAN specialists, most workers want to feel like they're empowered to make a difference.

For successful IT organizations, that can-do attitude is often centered on identifying and understanding the needs of the businesses they support. To do that, this year's Best Places take a multifaceted approach to developing the business knowledge of their IT workers. For many of these companies, such training goes well beyond instructor-led courses.

"We feel the state we've gotten to [as an IT organization] has provided us with a competitive advantage," says Gary Scholten, CIO at Des Moines-based Principal Financial Group Inc., which ranks No. 29 on this year's list. "True innovation happens at the intersection of business and IT. IT has to be at the table for that to happen, and IT has to have a certain amount of influence for that to occur."

One of the steps that Principal's IT group has taken to develop its business knowledge is requiring IT workers to participate in a new job-shadowing program with business staffers. The program, which was launched in late 2005, enables IT workers to learn how each of Principal's financial services businesses operates and how external customers interpret the company's financial products, says Scholten.

One IT staffer at Principal who has benefited from the job-shadowing program is Stacy Hansen. A senior business analyst, Hansen spent time earlier this spring with various business staffers who work with internal and external customers. Among other things, she learned how "those roles interact with each other to meet our business needs and how they impact us in IT," says Hansen, a nine-year company veteran.

Hansen also attended a full-day training session in May to learn more about how the work of Principal's IT staff affects the company's revenues and profits. For instance, this includes identifying priorities in systems changes requested by business managers that ultimately go toward helping those business units meet their strategic goals and helping the company reach its profitability targets, she says.

As with other companies on the 2006 Best Places to Work in IT list, Principal requires its 1,500 IT staffers to create a set of annual career development goals linked to the company's business strategies. Those goals are reviewed quarterly by supervisors.

Cross-pollination

At Tellabs Inc. (No. 21), business and IT managers work together to identify seminars and conferences that their respective staffs can attend to help encourage a "cross-pollination" of ideas, says CIO Jean Holley. For instance, the Naperville, Ill.-based communications company recently sent a mix of nine IT and business workers to a supply chain management conference to learn more about best practices that they could apply to Tellabs' logistics, demand

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management and planning activities, she says.

Holley also recently restructured Tellabs' IT organization by creating functional teams of business analysts, project managers and other IT workers who have expertise in specific areas such as human resources and supply chain management. "This way, if someone from the business is looking for help in particular area, they'll now know who to go to, and they won't have to ask which of our 224 IT employees can help out," says Holley.

IT executives at Harrah's Entertainment Inc. (No. 22) earlier this year created account teams within the IT organization to support the business requirements of internal customers, much like a sales team would handle a customer account, says Vijay Velamoor, vice president of IT services at the Las Vegas-based gaming and hospitality giant. "Many of the more progressive organizations are moving to this account management model," says Velamoor.

A Tighter Bond

Under some circumstances, formal classroom training is not only useful, it's imperative. For example, because Raytheon Co. (No. 32) is a defense contractor, the Waltham, Mass.-based company requires its 2,200-plus IT workers in the U.S. to attend an internal course about return on invested capital to help teach them about which types of expenses are permitted under government projects they're working on, says Vice President and CIO Rebecca Rhoads.

Many of Raytheon's U.S. IT workers are also rotated throughout its seven business divisions once every eight months. The program does more than teach IT workers about Raytheon's businesses, says Rhoads. It also allows them to strengthen relationships with business line managers who run the company's day-to-day operations, she says.

So, if an IT manager is struggling with a problem in Raytheon's aviation business, he can turn to managers he knows in one of the company's other businesses for their feedback and guidance, says Rhoads. "It's been a great way to knit the company together," she says.

Indeed, there's nothing like field experience to provide IT workers with business savvy. But Universal Health Services Inc. (No. 30) in King of Prussia, Pa., takes the concept a step further. UHS regularly sends clinical IT analysts out to its 25 acute-care medical facilities and 97 behavioral health centers to help understand hospital operations, says CIO Linda Reino. But to help increase its knowledge of hospital operations, the IT organization also employs a fair number of IT workers who happen to be registered nurses, she says.

"That's been a very conscious part of the design of the staff, so they are not stuck at headquarters and becoming desensitized to what's happening in the world of the hospital," says Reino.

When asked what type of business skills Reino seeks from her 350-person IT team, "attitude and initiative" leap from her lips. "I've found there isn't much you can't teach in life, and you want people who are self-motivated to find the answers" to business problems, she says.

At Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. (No. 38) in East Hanover, N.J., CIO Rob James and the IT leadership team take great pains to ensure that their 400-person IT team is plugged into all of the company's communications, including executive webcasts and presentations about business goals.

Mentoring is also key at Novartis. All IT employees are eligible to be mentored by a business manager. In fact, one IT manager is currently being mentored by the company's CEO, Alex Gorsky, says James.

In addition, Novartis offers a three-week global IT leadership program. Under the annual program, 30 people spend a week at Harvard University learning management techniques such as effective contract negotiations. Later in the year, they travel to Novartis offices in Europe for a 360-degree professional assessment of their leadership skills by senior business and IT managers, followed by comprehensive training. The groups spend another week attending technology innovation courses at MIT.

"It's essential that our people on the front line can talk the business language," says James. "To do that, we have to understand the business." ▸

> "I've found there isn't much you can't teach in life, and you want people who are self-motivated to find the answers [to business problems].
>
> **LINDA REINO**, CIO, UNIVERSAL HEALTH SERVICES INC.

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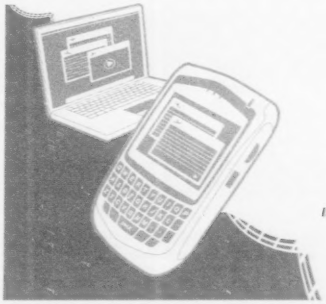

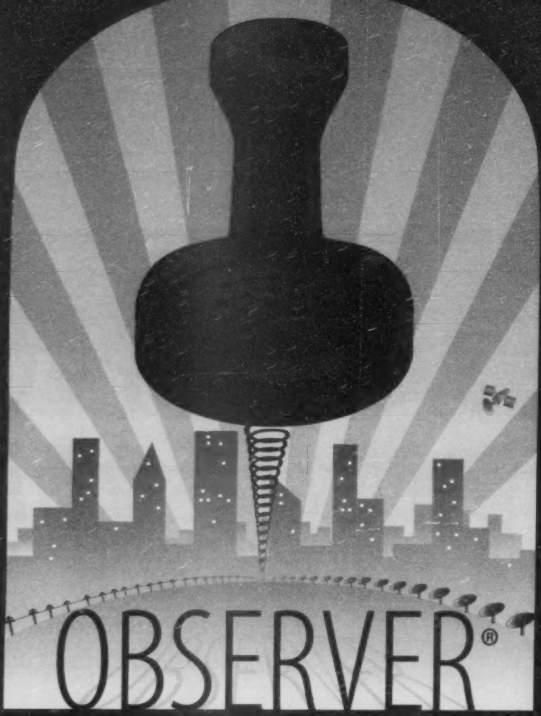

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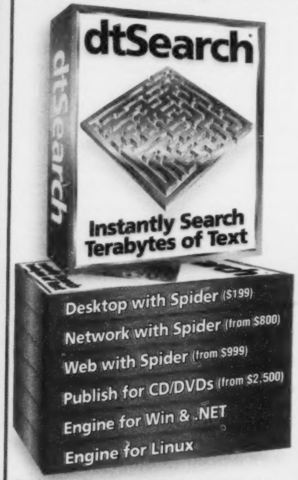
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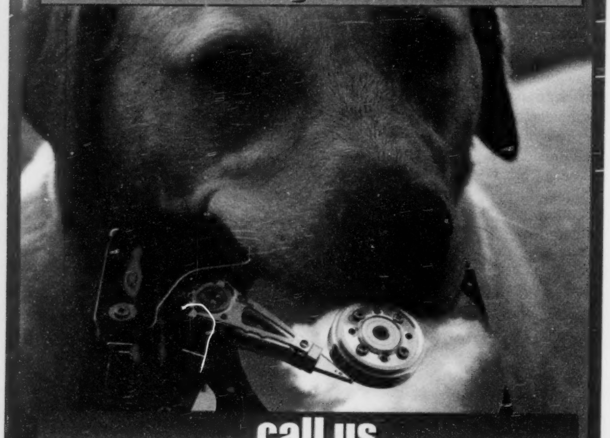

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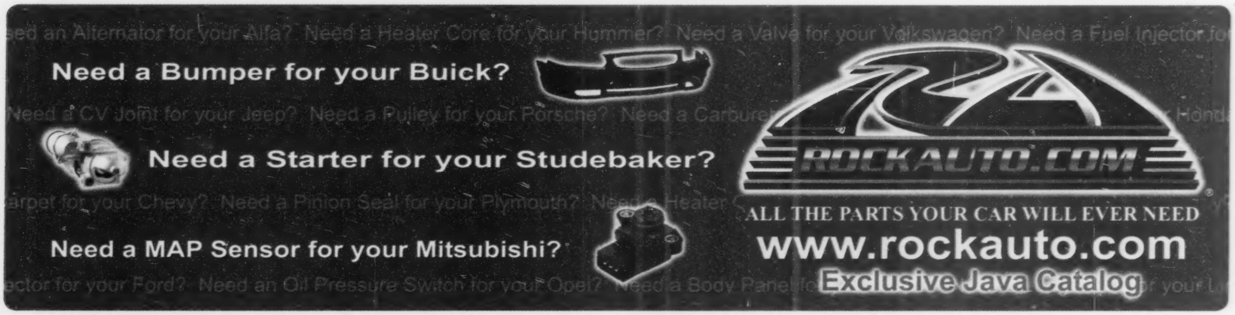
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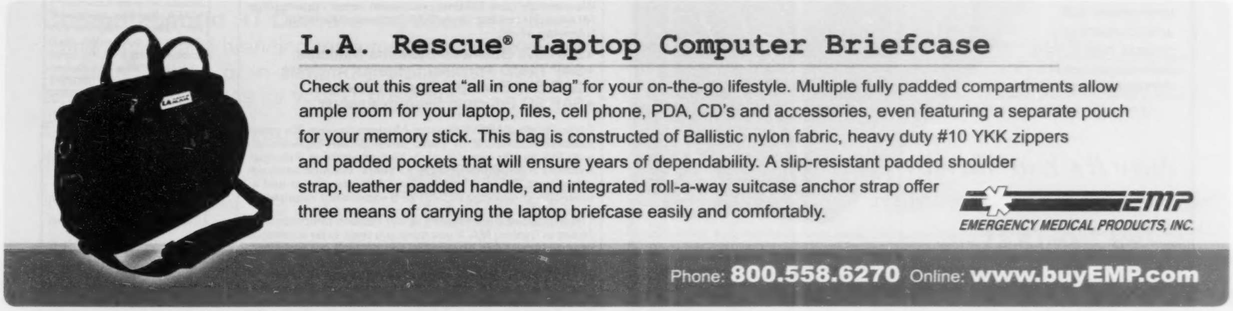
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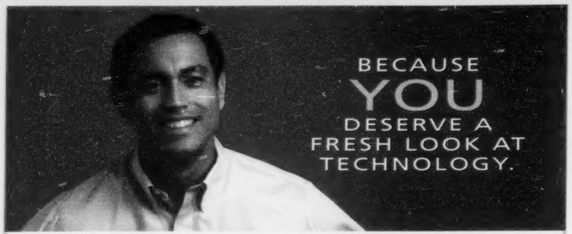

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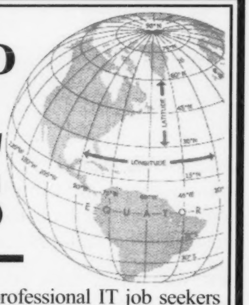

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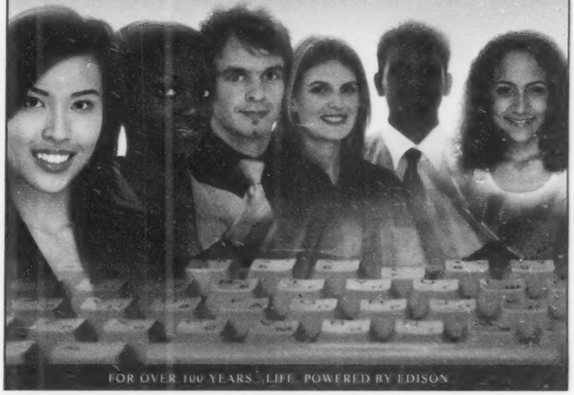

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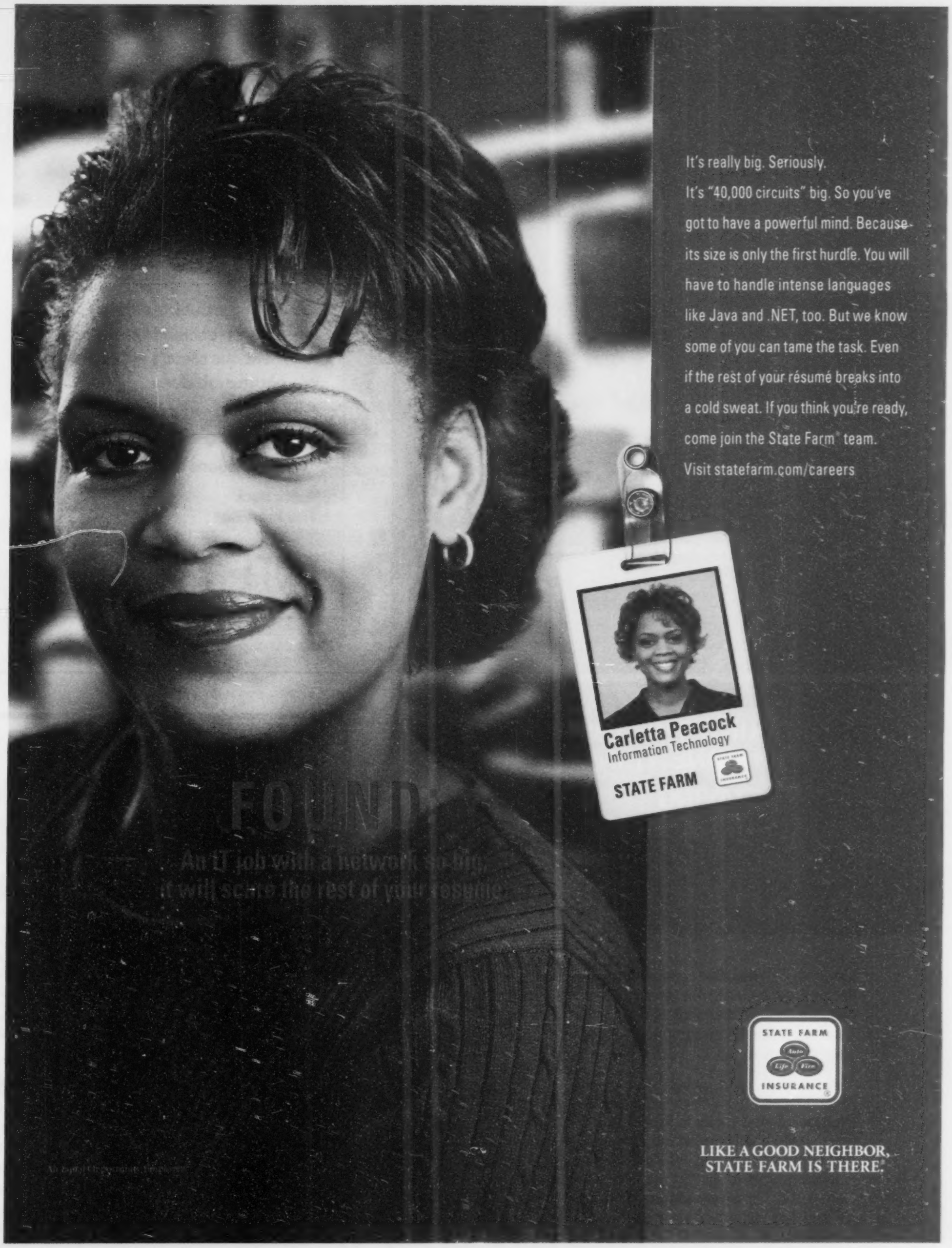
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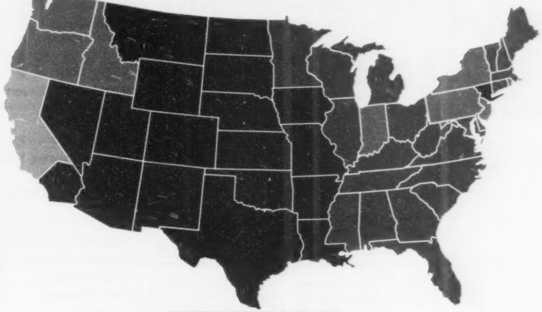

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Microsoft Live

think their companies will take advantage of the services in the next couple of years — or if they ever will.

"I'm very skeptical," said Justin Smith, a Buffalo, N.Y.-based senior messaging and collaboration administrator at Sodexho Inc. Smith said the food and management services company's IT department is accustomed to delivering a certain level of technical support that he isn't sure an outside vendor could reliably match. "I believe in having assets internal rather than external, if it's a cost wash or similar," he added.

But Ozzie's name alone carried enough credibility for David Porter, a software engineer at Progressive Casualty Insurance Co. in Mayfield Village, Ohio, to at least give the services pitch consideration. Porter said he has been impressed with Ozzie since he gained fame as the father of Notes at Lotus Development Corp. Ozzie later founded Groove Networks Inc., which Microsoft acquired last year.

Blended Offering

Not surprisingly, Microsoft isn't suggesting that IT departments make a whole-hog switch from packaged software to online services. Ozzie said the company recognizes that the transformation will occur over a period of years. Microsoft is taking a "very pragmatic approach," blending desktop and server software with a set of its own enterprise service offerings, plus others provided by business partners, he noted. That will enable IT managers to "make the right trade-offs" for their companies, he said.

Ozzie and other Microsoft executives cited several examples of services that might appeal to corporate IT managers. An IT department could offload e-mail to Microsoft's Exchange Hosted Services. Windows Live Search, which is in beta testing, will allow end users to bring together in a single query information from their PCs, Microsoft's SharePoint collaboration software, enterprise applications and the Internet.

> **I can't relate to what they're doing. It just doesn't register with me yet.**
>
> **TYRONE BOYD,** ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF NETWORK SERVICES AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY, ON MICROSOFT'S ONLINE SERVICES PUSH

In addition, Ozzie noted that Microsoft plans to federate its Windows Live identity service with Active Directory to enable authenticated users to access a vast array of Internet-based services without having to create a separate identity for each one. His keynote speech made use of Microsoft's Windows Live Virtual Earth mapping technology to trace his employment roots in a display so detailed that attendees could see the colors of buildings where he used to work.

Joel Zinn, a Tulsa-based senior IT developer at American Electric Power Co., said the Virtual Earth technology could help the utility's service technicians as they respond to calls. But like other users, Zinn said he harbors doubts about services such as hosted Exchange, especially at a company as geographically dispersed as AEP, which is based in Columbus, Ohio, and has 5 million customers in 11 states.

"Utilities tend to be conservative, so [company executives] would have to be convinced that there's a good return on it," Zinn said.

Andy Gorman, a senior technologist at a major financial institution, said Microsoft's services vision had a "pie in the sky" feel to him. "It's good in concept," he said. "I just can't see it being implemented in the next 10 years, and I don't think many companies are ready for it. They wouldn't buy it culturally."

Many users also would be on pins and needles over concerns about information security and a lack of control over their data, he said.

But Gartner Inc. analyst Daryl Plummer said such concerns are perennial and have yet to stop any Web-based, service-oriented architecture or software-as-a-service efforts from going forward. Plummer, in fact, said he thinks Microsoft will have to move farther away from software infrastructures than it is now, and toward services.

Microsoft's own software licensing scheme is paving the way toward broader adoption of online services, said the chief technology architect at a major food-processing company. Many Microsoft users already pay a yearly software fee, noted the architect, who asked not to be identified. Shifting to a services model is the next step, he said.

But some TechEd attendees still had trouble getting their arms around the new approach that Ozzie laid out.

"I can't relate to what they're doing," said Tyrone Boyd, associate director of network services at Howard University in Washington. "It just doesn't register with me yet." ▸

Microsoft CIO Splits Time Between IT, Hosted Services

BOSTON

As CIO and vice president of managed solutions at Microsoft, **Ron Markezich** is responsible for the company's internal IT operations and for delivering IT services to customers. Energizer Holdings Inc. last year became the first user to contract with Microsoft for remote desktop management, messaging and collaboration services. XL Capital Ltd., an insurance and financial services firm, has also signed a managed services deal, according to Markezich. During an interview with *Computerworld* at TechEd 2006 last week, Markezich discussed Microsoft's Internet-based services vision for corporate IT. Excerpts follow:

Why do you offer "managed solutions"? The reason we're doing this isn't so we can make this big business but so we can make sure our products work great in a managed and hosted environment. It's really more for product learning. If you think of my organization at Microsoft, it's really more of a product development organization than a typical IT organization.

Ray Ozzie talked at TechEd about extending the "Live" services vision to corporate IT. What does that vision mean for you? A lot of what we're doing is getting the products and solutions in place so corporate IT could subscribe to a partner running these services for them or run it themselves. That's one.

The other, you have to look at in three categories. One, you have the IT cloud, which is consumer-based – Hotmail, MySpace, that type of stuff. Managed IT is the other extreme, which would be the managed desktop, managed Exchange [e-mail], managed collaboration. And then there's a middle one that I would call unmanaged IT. That would be sold more to departments or for temporary usage.

Collaboration is a great example. On managed IT, you would have hosted SharePoint [with] a three-year contract and a certain [service-level agreement] for a certain price. And then, with unmanaged IT, you really buy hosted SharePoint on a monthly basis or on the basis of a project. You pay for it by the number of users. And then you can terminate it whenever you want.

To what degree do you offer these services now? With the cloud, we have Windows Live. If you look at Office Live, a lot of that is unmanaged IT. You as a small business owner or as a person running a project can subscribe to Office Live and have a site set up for you. For managed IT, you should look at managed solutions.

Like Energizer and XL Capital did? Right. They're the only two paying, public customers. We have other customers we're talking to. We're really in product development mode – we started this not even two years ago. And if you think of the product development life cycle, "not even two years" is fairly early.

Do you view the services model as a sea change for IT? It's going to be over time. But I think that's a great thing. With any CIO, a lot of what they would run as a service, they wouldn't consider strategic. Then you as an IT organization can focus your resources on what you consider more strategic and more unique to your company.

– CAROL SLIWA

Correction

A STORY ON business intelligence applications in the April 3 issue's News section ("SAS Touts Its Integration, Storage Tools for BI Projects") conveyed a misleading impression of the goals of marketing changes made by Pearl River Resort in Choctaw, Miss., after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast last August. John Enriquez, vice president of IT at Pearl River, said the casino operator used SAS Institute Inc.'s software to adjust its marketing plan in order to account for an influx of customers who previously had gone to casinos in hard-hit areas of Mississippi and Louisiana.

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Tim McGraw and Faith Hill's Neighbor's Keeper Foundation proudly joins Samsung's Four Seasons of Hope.

If this year's benefit and special performance were more intimate, your table would be the stage. Please support Tim McGraw and Faith Hill at Tavern on the Green on June 22nd to help the Neighbor's Keeper Foundation which provides funding for the purchase of goods and services designed to directly impact those in need. Other charities in Samsung's Four Seasons of Hope that are dedicated to helping those in need are proudly led by Joe Torre, Boomer Esiason, Dan Marino, Jon Bon Jovi, Rudy Giuliani, Arnold Palmer, Wayne Gretzky and Magic Johnson. To find out how to donate or to attend this once in a lifetime intimate event, visit www.fourseasonsofhope.com or email fsohdinnergala@comcast.net.

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FRANK HAYES ■ FRANKLY SPEAKING

Best Places Secret

EITHER YOU GET IT OR YOU DON'T. That's the open secret about the Best Places to Work in IT (see stories starting on page 27). Either you understand that being a great place to work is a competitive business advantage or you still think it's a luxury your company can't afford in a competitive business world.

If you're nodding your head right now, you get it. If you're about to turn the page, hold on. You still have a chance to figure out the secret.

Here's a hint: It's not really about what you do for your IT workers. It's about what they do for the business — and why.

Chances are, you think the way to create a great place to work is to make your employees happy. You also think the best way to make employees happy is to reward them generously. That means a hefty salary, a good benefits package, maybe profit sharing or even stock options. That can get expensive, but it's necessary if you want to compete for the best IT talent.

In other words, you believe IT workers' satisfaction carries a cost that you'll get some benefit from. That's perfectly logical. But it's a gamble, not a secret to success.

And it's no sure thing. All that cost is just wasted if your IT people can't wait to get out the door at the end of the day. If your IT shop is merely a lucrative place to have a job, not truly a great place to work, that gamble will never pay off.

See, you're thinking about it backward. Don't start with the cost. Begin by considering something that always tops the list of what we're supposed to be doing: aligning IT with the business.

How do you achieve that? It's not enough to do ROI calculations and get business sponsors for every IT project. No, the way you line up IT with the business is by making sure your IT people are lined up with the business.

They have to see what the business does in order to make sure the systems they produce and run really meet business needs. And to do that, they've got to watch users solving business problems, listen to salespeople dealing with customers and understand how the products move and where the money comes from.

If you can show them that — find ways to get them connected to the business, *committed* to the business — they'll no longer think of themselves as just being in IT. They'll be in insurance or banking, retail or manufacturing, pharma or transportation, or whatever industry your company is in.

That's when they stop struggling against the incomprehensible demands of those @#$%! business-side people and start meeting and even anticipating those business needs.

When IT people are engaged with the business, when they see how it fits together and recognize that they're not just slinging code and stringing wires but making a real impact — that's when they're not just working to succeed at IT projects. They're working to succeed at business.

And when it all makes sense, when IT people know they're making business happen, they're a lot more satisfied. And that makes their IT shop a great place to work — at the same time they're turning IT into a value generator in the business, not just a cost center.

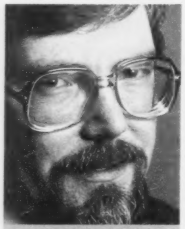
Now *that's* a competitive advantage.

The salaries, the perks, the benefits, the flextime, the training, the opportunities — yeah, you need all those. And when IT is delivering the goods because IT's people are tightly aligned with the business, it's not hard to make the case that these aren't luxuries. They're just good support for people who are driving success in the business.

That's the secret. Get it? Good. Now help yourself to the ideas from this year's Best Places to Work in IT. They're not just tips on which benefits 27,000 IT people like best. They're also ways of engaging IT people with the business so they like their jobs, too.

Just remember: This isn't about doing things to make your IT people happy.

It's about creating a place where IT people are happy making your business a success. ▸



FRANK HAYES, *Computerworld's* senior news columnist, has covered IT for more than 20 years. Contact him at **frank_hayes@computerworld.com**.

SHARK TANK

The Ones They Stole, Right?

There's an overnight break-in at this company, and the thieves steal the servers and a box of mobile phones. "We all come into work, the network is down, and a few detectives are milling about, so we wait around for the word to go home," says a pilot fish there who decides to spend the time going over some work that's already on his hard drive. "After a few minutes, one bright spark comes over to tell me I shouldn't be using my computer," fish reports. "She said the police were investigating the theft – and I might corrupt some evidence on the servers."

Stuck

Pilot fish's manager forgot he approved fish's vacation, so when fish returns, his big boss calls him in. Why didn't you tell anyone you'd be gone? boss asks. Fish says he'll forward the vacation approval and points out that his voice mail message, his automatic e-mail out-of-office message and his electronic calendar all showed his vacation. Says fish, "My boss smiled sarcastically and said, 'Yes, but you didn't leave a yellow sticky on your door, so how could we know you were on vacation?' "

Paper? Is That Stuff Still Around?

Regulators want this company to supply minutes of all committee meetings for review. "They requested them electronically," says a pilot fish on the scene. "We ask the board secretary where to find them. She tells us they're in her personal folder, but we only find the latest copy of each committee's minutes. Seems that each month, she opens the old file, deletes the content, enters the new content and saves it over the old one. Thankfully, she has paper copies."

Yes, It's Normal

This organization is migrating to using smart-card-based network log-ons, so sysadmin pilot fish has been visiting users' workstations to configure them for using the smart cards. "After visiting one user, I received an e-mail from her," fish says. "She asked, 'I have found that I have to be logged on to send e-mail. Is this normal?' "

Poetry in Motion

"There's a bug in my monitor," executive smirks as he calls in IT pilot fish for help. Some sort of prankware? fish wonders. Or a virus? "A tiny eight-legged bug appeared to be walking rapidly across his LCD, like something out of an old-time video game," fish says. Fish grabs another laptop and plugs the buggy screen into it. "It's still there," sighs fish. "There's a real bug trapped inside his display. Poetic justice."

SHARKY WANTS/your true tale./Send it to me/by e-mail: **sharky@computerworld.com**. You'll snag a snazzy Shark shirt if I use it. And check out Sharky's blog, browse the Sharkives and sign up for Shark Tank home delivery at **computerworld.com/sharky**.

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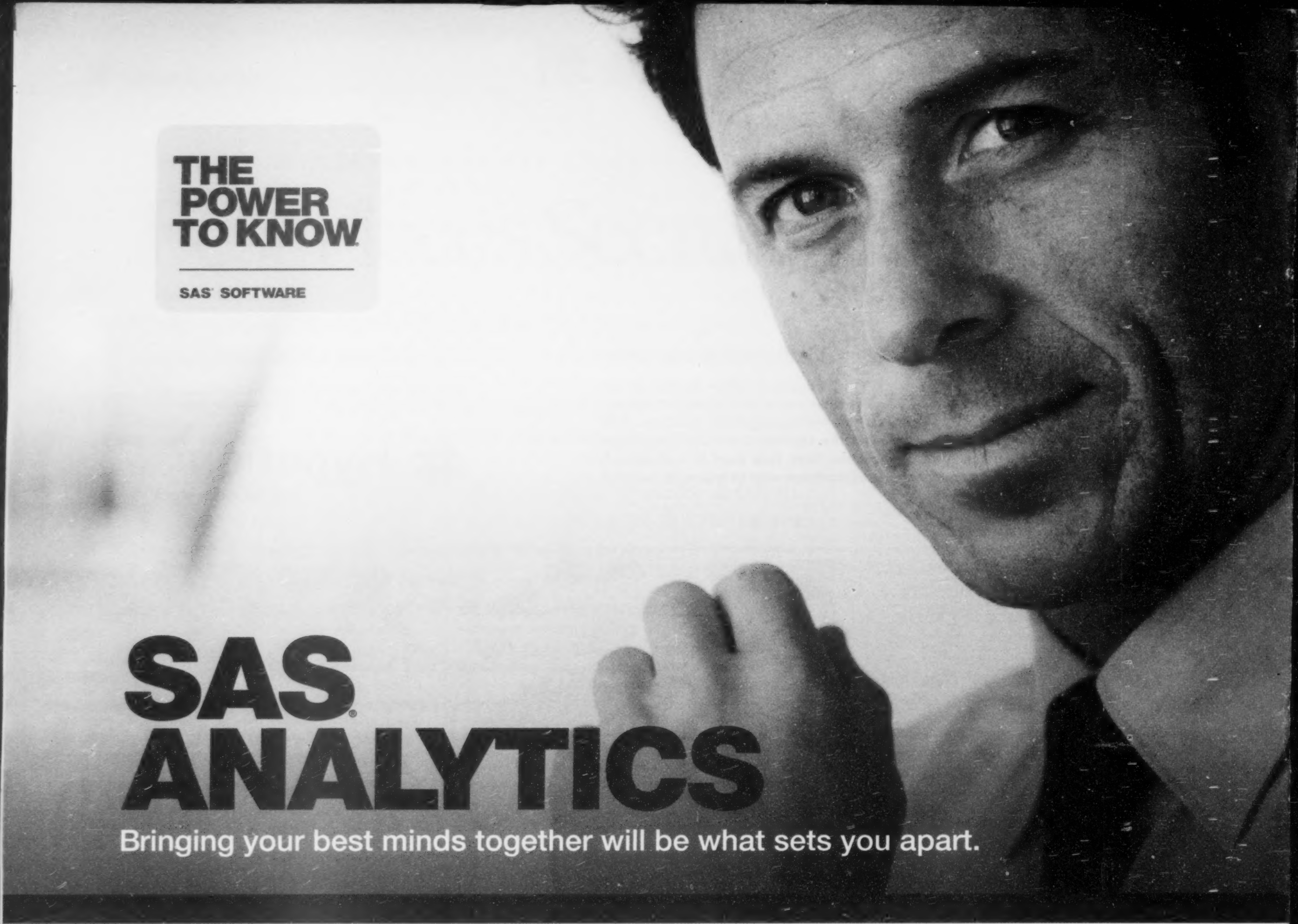
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